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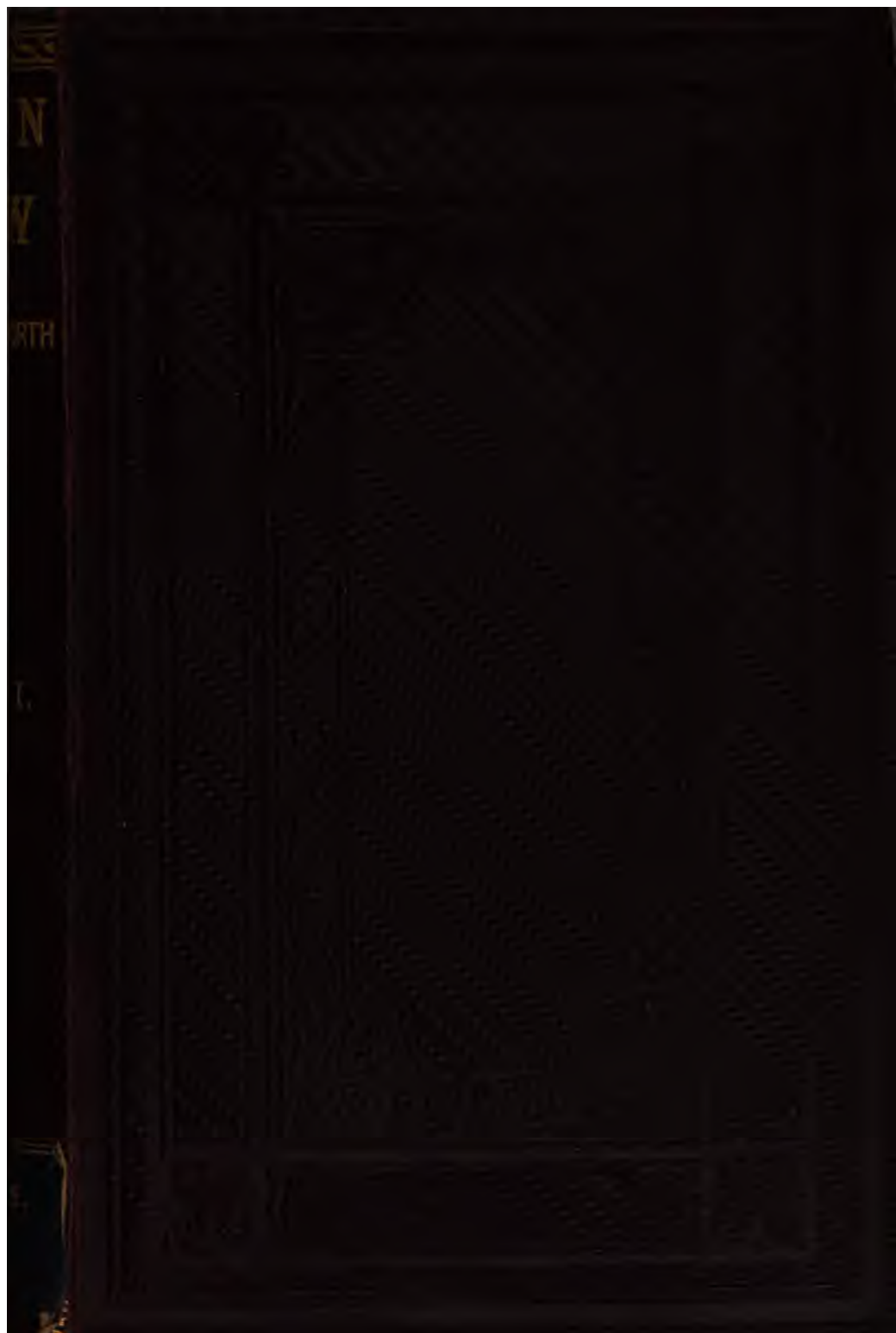
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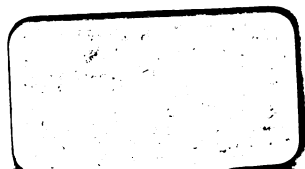
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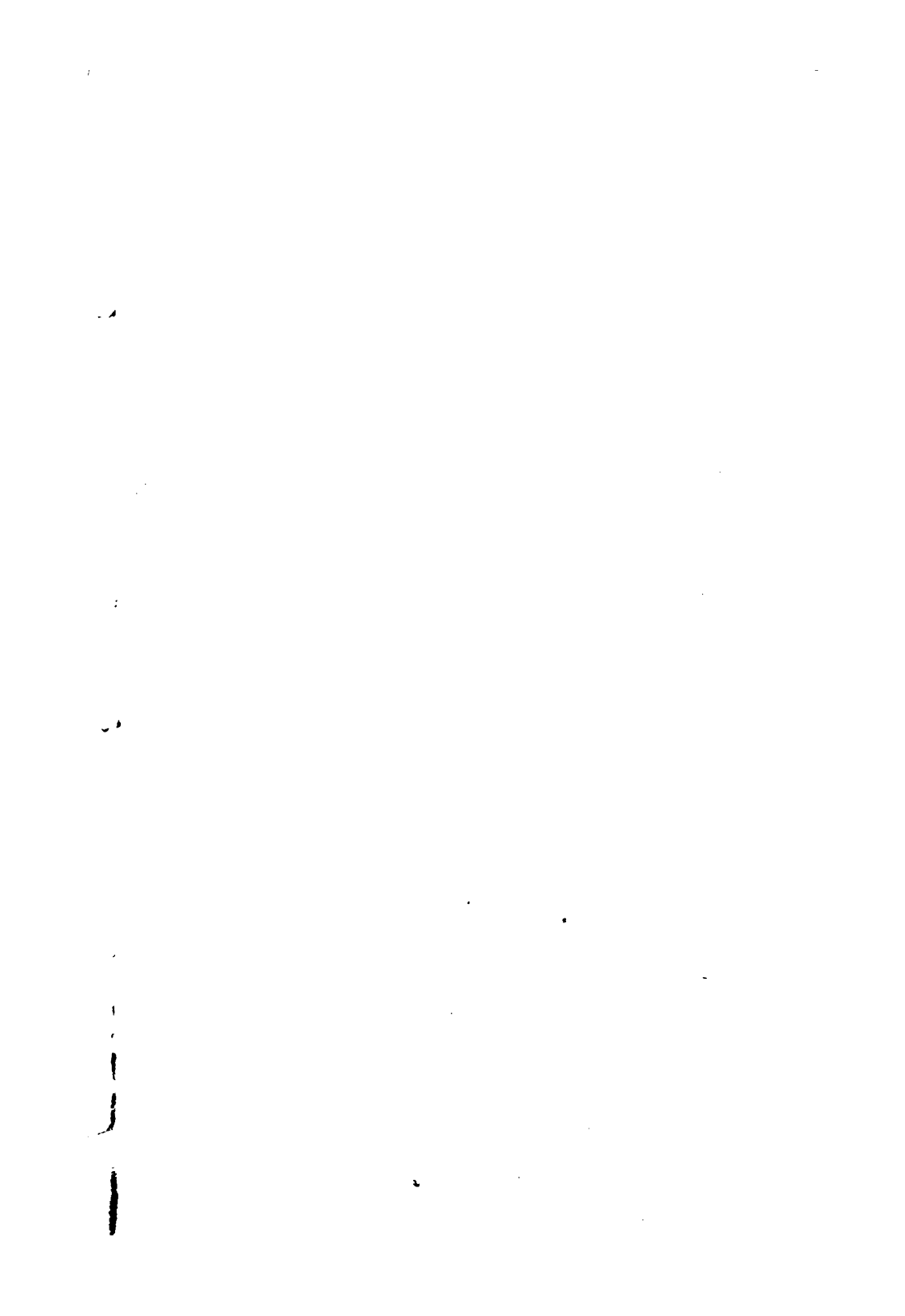
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JOHN LAW:

THE PROJECTOR.

BY

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

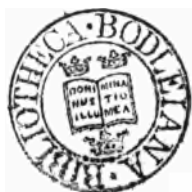
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JOHN LAW.

PROLOGUE.

BEAU WILSON AND HIS WIFE.

VOL. I.

B



I

HOW THE LAIRD OF LAUBISTON FIRST SET FOOT IN SAINT JAMES'S-STREET.

ABOUT noon on a charming day towards the latter end of May, 1705, a sedan-chair was set down opposite White's Coffee-house, in Saint James's-street.

There was nothing unusual in the circumstance. Two or three chairs, indeed, had just discharged their freight on the same spot without attracting the slightest attention ; but the case was very different with the remarkably handsome man who

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JOHN LAW.

PROLOGUE.

BEAU WILSON AND HIS WIFE.

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"I am a Scotsman, not a Frenchman, and am only just arrived from Edinburgh. I have never been in London before."

"Then you're heartily welcome to Town, sir," rejoined Terry; "and I only wish there wos more Scotchmen like you. But there's not many crosses the Tweed with a purse so well lined and a hand so liberal as yer hon'r's. If your countrymen has any money, they buttons up their pockets, and keeps it there. But we'll drink long life and prosperity to yer hon'r in a glass of usquebaugh afore we're an hour older."

"By the powers will we!" cried his comrade. "But we'd like to couple a name wid the toast. 'Twould make it sound all the heartier."

"'Tis a noble name his hon'r has got, I'll be sworn," cried Terry. "Maybe it's the great Duke of Argyle himself."

"You are wrong again, friend. I am a simple Scottish gentleman, without any pretension to title.

In my own country I am known as Mr. Law of Lauriston."

"And a famous name it is," rejoined Terry. "I've often heerd ov it. Wasn't the furst Master Laa ov Larrystown a great laayer, yer hon'r?"

"The first laird of Lauriston, my father, was a goldsmith of Edinburgh," replied Law. "He purchased the estate, whence I derive my territorial designation, from the Dalgleish family, about twenty years ago. Now you know all about me—who I am, and what I am—and I trust your curiosity is fully satisfied."

"Lord love yer hon'r, it ain't curiosity, but interest," replied Terry, with his best bow; "and we're both fully sensible ov your hon'r's great condescension in takin' us into yer confidence. A purty name you've got, Mister Laa ov Larrystown, and well known 'twill be in the world one ov these days. You won't be offended wid me if I say you're born to good luck. I can read it in

yer face. You'll win more riches than you'll ever spend, and gain higher places than you expect to reach."

"How do you know, rascal, what sums I hope to win, or what high places I expect to reach?" cried Law. "But you are more nearly right now than you were before. I am master of a scheme that will infallibly make me rich, and of necessity advance me to any high place I may aspire to."

"Didn't I say so?" cried Terry, delighted. "I'm a true prophet, if ever there was one. I knew in a twinklin' that his hon'r was a great schaymer."

"If the Scotch Parliament had adopted a plan I laid before it, I should have trebled the revenue of the country," observed Law.

"Wot thunderin' big blockheads the Scotch Parlimint must be not to adopt the plan," replied Terry, shrugging his shoulders with contempt. "But you'll find the English members more alive to their own interest. I only wish yer hon'r 'ud

giv Pat and me the chance ov treblin' our capital, and teach us how to turn one guinea into three."

"I could teach you how to make a hundred guineas out of one, and a thousand out of a hundred," remarked Law. "But that's a secret I keep to myself."

"No wonder," rejoined Terry, with a somewhat incredulous grin. "It ud nivir do to teach all the world how to grow rich. Bedad! yer hon'r must be a greater conjuror than one o' them greybeards as we see i' the print-shops, sittin' beside furnaces, peerin' into long-necked glass bottles, and changin' lead into gowld."

"No, friend," replied Law, laughing. "I don't pretend to transmute metals. In fact, I would dispense with gold altogether, and substitute paper-money."

"Dispense wi' gowld, and substitute paper!" exclaimed Terry, with a comical grimace. "Then I fear yer hon'r's plan won't suit us any more than the Scotch Parlimint. Fairy money, they say in

Ireland, turns into dry leaves, and lest this guinea should turn into paper, we'll be off to the Blue Posts round the corner, and spend it."

"A very sensible resolution," observed Law. "But one of these days you'll call to mind what I've said to you."

"Divil doubt it!" replied Terry. "Many's the time we'll think ov yer hon'r. And if ever you want a sedan-cheer, Terry O'Flaherty and Pat Molloy is the boys as 'll carry you to the world's end and back again. So come along, Pat. We're only takin' up his hon'r's precious time."

With this, they both shouldered their straps, caught hold of the poles, and trotted jauntily off with the chair.

This discourse was not lost upon a group of loungers collected near the steps of White's Coffee-house, and possibly Mr. Law might have intended some of his remarks for their benefit.

All these personages were young beaux, noticeable for gay velvet coats of various hues bedizened

with lace, and powdered perukes of the latest fashion, and being leaders of ton, and lawgivers in regard to dress, they felt themselves called upon to criticise the stranger's deportment and attire. Not that either was open to censure, for Mr. Law's habiliments were rich and elegant, and of the newest mode—being, in fact, fabricated in town—while his manner was singularly graceful; but these foppish censors were resolved to find fault.

Accordingly, the Hon. Charlie Carrington declared that the handsome laird's blue velvet coat, laced with silver, was ill made, though it fitted to perfection, and was manufactured by Charlie's town tailor, Rivers. Sir Harry Archer ridiculed Law's peruke as exaggerated and badly powdered, though it was fresh from the hands of the court perruquier, Houblon. Dick Bodville said the Scot's figure was too slight, though he could not deny its symmetry. Tom Bagot thought Mr. Law too tall, and Jerry Ratcliffe not tall enough. Bob Foley, who

was as stiff as a poker, pronounced him awkward and boorish, though he was contradicted by Law's every movement; and drawling Joe Lovel said the fellow had a strong Scotch accent, though it was nothing more than a very agreeable Doric.

Envy all. Not one of the sneering coxcombs but secretly acknowledged that the laird of Lauriston was one of the handsomest and most distinguished-looking men that ever trod the pavement of Saint James's-street. But let us see what he was really like.

John Law then was just thirty-four, but he looked almost ten years younger. His personal advantages were remarkable; figure tall and commanding, slight, but admirably proportioned; features classical and regular in outline; eyes large, azure in colour, and somewhat prominent; complexion delicate as a woman's. Yet, with all this apparent effeminacy, a very manly spirit dwelt in his breast. John Law was remarkably active, excelled at tennis, rode boldly and well, was an

ardent sportsman, expert in the use of pistol and small-sword, and his courage had already been proved in more than one encounter.

Though no shallow fop, who thought only of decorating his handsome person, John Law did not disdain the aid of dress, but, as we have seen, set himself off to the best advantage, just as he sought to improve his great natural endowments by study and art. In his manner there was perhaps a little—very little—haughtiness, but it was totally devoid of insolence and assumption, and the pride he manifested seemed almost inseparable from the consciousness he could not fail to possess of great mental powers and personal advantages. When he was resolved to please, his manner was so fascinating that he was quite irresistible.

Whether that smooth and serene brow could ever be darkened by frowns, that soft and suave expression be obliterated by angry passions, those eyes of summer blue and almost dove-like tenderness emit terrible and scathing glances,—whe-

ther any such changes as these could be wrought will be seen as we proceed with our history.

At present we have only to exhibit the gallant laird of Lauriston as he was at this particular juncture, brilliant in exterior, captivating in manner, disposed to enjoy himself, and having ample means of doing so; with a head full of schemes, and a heart full of ambition, resolved, like a desperate gambler, to throw for the largest stake in the game of life, win it, or beggar himself in the attempt.

On the death of his father, William Law, goldsmith and banker, Edinburgh (goldsmiths were bankers in those days), which occurred several years previously, John Law came into possession of a considerable fortune, including the lands of Lauriston—an extensive property situated on the south shore of the Firth of Forth. Hence it being wholly unnecessary for him to follow any occupation, he led the life of a young man of fashion, dressed gaily, choosing idle and extravagant associates, who

led him into all sorts of follies, and losing a great deal of money at play. At this period, from his somewhat effeminate appearance and manner, he was known amongst his intimates as Jessamy John, while those less familiarly acquainted with him were wont to call him Beau Law. After leading this dissipated life for a few years, the young spendthrift found it necessary to retrench, and committing the management of his property to an excellent mother, who, luckily for him, was still living, he passed over into Holland, and engaged himself as secretary to a Scotch mercantile house in Amsterdam. His object in doing so was to study the operations of the great Dutch Bank, for he had now made up his mind to abandon his former frivolous pursuits, and become a man of business. At an earlier period he had sedulously devoted himself to the study of arithmetic and geometry, and had mastered the science of algebra, and he now laboured hard to acquire a perfect knowledge of political economy, and having a great taste for

the subject, as well as extraordinary capacity, he speedily succeeded in his aim. He remained in Amsterdam for three years, and on his return to Edinburgh, being now a proficient in all financial matters, he voluntarily devoted himself to the arrangement of the Scotch revenue accounts, and rendered important service to the commissioners. Having thus introduced himself to public notice under a new and more promising aspect, he sought to establish his reputation by publishing a pamphlet, entitled "Proposals and Reasons for constituting a Council of Trade," wherein he brought forward an able and elaborate plan for reviving the trade and manufactures of Scotland, which at that time were greatly depressed; but though the scheme did not meet with the encouragement it deserved, it had the effect of introducing him to some of the most eminent men of the country, and amongst others to the Duke of Argyle, his sons the Marquis of Lorn and Lord Archibald Campbell, and the Marquis of Tweeddale. Subse-

quently, he published another work, containing a proposal for supplying the nation with money, and followed it up by laying before the Scottish Parliament a plan for removing the difficulties under which the kingdom laboured from the great scarcity of specie, suggesting for this purpose the establishment of a National Bank on a new plan.

But this second plan, though supported by the court party and the Squadrone, was likewise rejected. Finding that nothing could be done in Scotland, Law began to turn his attention to the Continent, where he felt sure his plans would be adopted by some needy state, which they must speedily enrich. Before going abroad, however, he resolved to communicate them to the English government, and with this design set out for London.

Up to the time of leaving Edinburgh, Law had been in the utmost request in society; and as he had a very large acquaintance, general regret was expressed at his departure—the more so, as he held

out no hopes of a speedy return, but expressed an intention of passing several years abroad. When he quitted Edinburgh, it was felt that he had left a blank behind him, which could not readily be filled up. The northern metropolis had lost the first of its beaux and its choicest spirit—many pleasant circles missed their chief attraction—and many a bonny damsel sighed to think that the handsome laird of Lauriston was gone, having taken her heart with him.

Efforts had certainly been made to detain him, especially by some of the syrens just alluded to, but Law was proof against them all. Ambition was the dominant passion in his breast, and ambition pointed out that Edinburgh was too circumscribed a stage for the full display of his powers, so he resolved to transfer himself to London, and, if he failed there, to pass over to the Continent, where he felt assured of success. So he bade a tender adieu to many weeping fair ones, who vowed they should continue inconsolable, but who,

nevertheless, were easily consoled, shook hands with his companions, and stepping into his berlin, posted up to London as fast as four horses could carry him, arriving, without any hindrance from highwaymen, on the fourth evening, when he alighted at the Hummums, in Covent-garden. His first visit, next morning, was to White's Coffee-house, which had been established about six or seven years previously, and was then in great vogue, and where he expected to meet some persons to whom he had letters of introduction.

As he was about to enter the coffee-house, Law bowed to the group of young coxcombs stationed at the door, but his salutation was very slightly and coldly returned by them. Nevertheless, he paused, and with great politeness of manner inquired whether any of the gentlemen could inform him if Mr. Angus Wilson was in the house.

"The waiter will inform you, sir, if you will take the trouble to enter," rejoined the individual nearest him.

Quite unconcerned at the dry and repelling tone of this answer, Mr. Law said, "May I venture to inquire whom I have the honour of addressing?"

The young coxcomb looked at him impertinently for a moment, as if considering what reply he should make. At last he said, "You are a stranger, sir, and, as such, unacquainted with the usages of society, which forbid a gentleman to address another without a formal introduction. I am therefore willing to excuse the irregularity, and beg to inform you that I am Sir Harry Archer."

"Faith, I'm delighted to hear it," replied Law. "Then I hope Sir Harry Archer will allow me the pleasure of shaking hands with him."

"Sir!" exclaimed Archer, drawing back, "you presume——"

"At least, allow me to give you this letter of introduction from the Marquis of Lorn," said Law, presenting a note to him.

"A letter from the Marquis of Lorn!" exclaimed

Sir Harry, opening it, and hastily glancing at its contents. "Ah! my dear Mr. Law, I'm enchanted to make your acquaintance. Lorn speaks of you in the highest terms—the very highest terms—and begs me to introduce you to all my friends, which I shall not fail to do, and I will commence with those present. Gentlemen," he added to the others, "let me make Mr. Law of Lauriston known to you—a most accomplished gentleman—*tres répandu* among the Edinburgh beau monde—and who cannot fail to prove a most agreeable acquisition to our own society."

Bows were then made by the whole party, who professed themselves charmed to know any friend of the Marquis of Lorn.

"We could not help overhearing what passed between you and your chairmen, Mr. Law," observed Sir Harry, laughing, "so we are to a certain extent acquainted with your history."

"Oh! I was merely diverting myself with them," replied Law. "I have heard that your

London chairmen are odd characters, and wished to see what they are really like."

"You got hold of two good specimens of the class," observed Sir Harry. "Most of them are Irishmen, and are free and easy enough, as you have just discovered. They take us everywhere, and consequently become spies upon all our actions; but I must do them the justice to say that they rarely blab. But let us go in. We can continue our conversation as we sip our chocolate. Have you breakfasted, Mr. Law?"

"More than three hours ago," replied the other. "But I am quite equal to a cup of chocolate. I am an early riser, Sir Harry."

"Ah! that shows you keep good hours. But before you have been a month in Town you will lie in bed late. What with the playhouses, the opera, ridottos, masquerades, Ranelagh, and Vauxhall, petits soupers, and other amusements, we are obliged to sleep off our fatigues, and are fit for nothing before noon. We are wonderfully early

this morning, considering we were all at a masquerade last night."

"'Tis a pity you were not there, Mr. Law," observed the Honourable Charlie Carrington. "It was vastly amusing. There were plenty of charming masks."

"Charlie would have you believe that half a dozen of them showed him their faces," remarked Bob Foley. "But that won't pass with us. We know better."

"One person discovered herself to me," rejoined Charlie, "and that was enough, for she had the loveliest face in the room."

"How can you tell that, since you beheld none of the others?" said Dick Bodville.

"Because she is allowed by all of you to be the Queen of Beauty," said Carrington.

"Then I know whom you mean," drawled Joe Lovel.

"Guess as you please, I shan't enlighten you further," rejoined Carrington.

"Poh! You have said enough to give us to understand that you allude to the beautiful Belinda," observed Sir Harry.

"Think so, and welcome. I say nothing," replied Carrington.

"May I, without indiscretion, inquire who the beautiful Belinda is?" asked Law.

"She is the finest woman in Town, and the universal toast among the young men of fashion, all of whom are dying for her," returned Sir Harry. "That is all I dare tell you about her. But don't believe a word that Charlie Carrington has just said. Belinda would never unmask to *him*."

"But I maintain she did," rejoined Carrington, "and gave me a full view of her lovely features."

"Ha! ha! ha! you have betrayed yourself," cried Sir Harry, laughing. "Well, if Belinda did permit you a glimpse of her countenance, it was not so much to gratify you as to plague her jealous spouse, for I'll be sworn he was watching her."

"Now I think on it, there was an Othello not far from us at the moment," said Carrington. "It might have been the tiresome old dotard."

"'Twas he, rely on't; and he is like enough to run you through the body for daring to breathe a word of love to his fickle Desdemona."

"I desire nothing better than to cross swords with him," said Carrington. "I'll kill him, and marry his widow."

"So the fair Belinda is married, I find?" said Law.

"Unhappily for herself—happily for us," rejoined Sir Harry. "She is a most exquisite creature—as you will own, for you are sure to know her—who is united to a man thrice her own age, and who is horribly jealous of her. But you shall know more anon. Let us to breakfast."

Upon this, they entered the coffee-house.

The principal room on the ground floor was full, and a great deal of conversation was going on amongst the company. Most of the guests were

fashionably dressed young men, like those Law had first encountered, who were seated at different little tables, taking coffee or chocolate, reading the newspapers, discussing the politics of the hour, singing the praises of Mrs. Oldfield and Mrs. Bracegirdle, settling a cock-fight, or betting upon a race about to come off at Newmarket. The laird of Lauriston attracted considerable attention as he entered the room; but it was soon known who he was, for Sir Harry introduced him to several of the company.

A large table placed in a bow-window overlooking the street was reserved for the party with whom Law had become associated, and as soon as they were seated, their cups were filled by the officious waiters with frothing and delicious chocolate.

While the chocolate was being served, Sir Harry inquired of one of the waiters whether Mr. Angus Wilson had been there that morning, and, on re-

ceiving an answer in the negative, he remarked to Law, who was sitting next him:

"I scarcely thought he would show himself so early, as he was at the masquerade last night. By-the-by, Mr. Law," he added, with a smile, "are you personally acquainted with Mr. Wilson?"

"I am not, Sir Harry," replied Law, "but the Duke of Argyle has favoured me with a letter to him."

"You could not possibly have a better introduction, for Mrs. Wilson was a Campbell. But since you don't know him, I may as well tell you his history. Five-and-thirty years ago, Angus Wilson was a page to his Majesty King Charles the Second, and was then a sufficiently beau garçon to be much admired by the ladies of that pleasant court. On the death of the merry monarch, Angus enjoyed the favour of his successor, and became so much the fashion, that he acquired the title of Beau Wilson, a designation which he still re-

tains. He served in Ireland with distinction under James the Second, and fought at the battle of the Boyne, where he was wounded in the hip, and, after his sovereign's disastrous defeat, accompanied him to St. Germain. It was only on Queen Anne's accession to the throne that Mr. Wilson made his peace with the powers that be, and returned to England."

"Then I presume that he still remains attached to the cause of the Stuarts?" observed Law.

"It is so understood," replied Sir Harry. "However, the old beau doesn't trouble himself much with political intrigues and state plots now, having quite enough to do to manage his own affairs. Last spring the belle of the season, who turned all heads and captivated all hearts, was the lovely daughter of Colonel Grant Campbell; and you will scarce credit that such a charming person should be induced to give her hand to Mr. Wilson."

"He must be a bold man to venture upon the step," observed Law, laughing.

"No one would have thought him capable of such folly," said Sir Harry, "for he is a thorough man of the world, and fully alive to the risk he ran, but he was completely infatuated by the charms of la belle Campbell. She had plenty of admirers, but none who suited her so well as the wealthy old beau, so she accepted him. However, she has not found him quite so tractable as she expected. He is desperately jealous and suspicious, so that she can scarcely lead a happy life."

"You can't conceive, Mr. Law, two greater contrasts than this ill-assorted pair afford," remarked Charlie Carrington. "She, scarce twenty, and witching as Venus—he, old, ugly, and limping, like Vulcan, from the effects of the wound in the hip which he got at the battle of the Boyne. She, captivating in manner and smiling on all—he, sour and sarcastic, and jealous as the devil."

"No wonder, with such a wife," said Sir Harry. "You would be just as jealous of her yourself, if she were Mrs. Carrington. But you don't do quite justice to Beau Wilson. He is neither so very old nor so very ugly as you represent him. He is certainly lame, and rather high-shouldered, but he has very polished manners, and is a high-bred gentleman, though of the old school."

"Of the school of our grandsires," rejoined Carrington.

"Well, our grandsires were just as fine fellows in their day as we are in ours," retorted Archer. "You don't imagine the gallants of Charles the Second's time were inferior to the wits and beaux of Queen Anne's day. Angus Wilson, I maintain, is a refined gentleman, and Mr. Law, I am quite sure, will be of my opinion when he sees him—provided he doesn't make the old beau jealous."

"I now know who were the Othello and Desdemona of last night's masquerade," remarked Law.

"Don't fall in love with Belinda, and you will have a fast friend in her husband," observed Sir Harry. "From what you let fall just now, Mr. Law, I fancy you have some project which you desire to bring forward?"

"I have an important financial scheme, which I mean to lay before Lord Godolphin," replied Law; "and I fancy Mr. Wilson can obtain me an interview with his lordship, or with the chief secretary of state, Lord Sunderland."

"Not a doubt of it," replied Sir Harry. "Beau Wilson stands so well with the Duchess of Marlborough, that through her grace he can readily procure you access to the Queen or her ministers."

"So the Duke of Argyle informed me," said Law. "If I can only get the Duchess of Marlborough to take up my scheme, it will infallibly be adopted."

"Well, we are all to have a share in it, that is understood," said Sir Harry, laughing.

"Quite so," rejoined Law, seriously; "and I

engage that the shares will be eagerly sought, and rise so rapidly, and to such a height, that if you buy a thousand pounds' worth you shall win ten thousand in less than a month."

This assertion elicited exclamations of astonishment from all the party, and Sir Harry shouted out,

"Bravissimo! That's the scheme for my money. I shall go for a thousand shares."

"And I for ten thousand, if I can get that amount of shares," said Charlie Carrington. "I can borrow the money for a month."

"We'll all go in for ten thousand!" cried the others. "Make a fortune while we are about it. Success to your scheme, Mr. Law!"

"I hope you'll bring it forward without delay, Mr. Law," said Jerry Ratcliffe. "Thirty thousand would set me up."

"It depends upon her Majesty's ministers, not upon me," replied Law. "If Lord Godolphin entertains the project, the thing is done."

“And our fortune made,” added Sir Harry.
“All the influence we possess shall be brought to bear upon the project, and I think we *can* do something with Godolphin and Sunderland—eh, gentlemen?”

“We’ll try, at all events,” rejoined the others.

II.

HOW MR. LAW PLAYED AT BASSET, AND BROKE THE
BANK.

SHORTLY afterwards, the whole party adjourned to an inner room, where play was going on.

Like the principal coffee-room, this *salon de jeu* was full of company. In the centre of the apartment was a tapis vert, at which a tailleur presided, and round it several young men of fashion were seated, playing basset. A good deal of interest was excited in the game, as considerable sums were staked by the punters, whose purses were speedily emptied. Others, however, just as eager to risk

their money, took their places, so the game went merrily on, with pretty nearly the same result to those engaged in it.

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Law?" said Sir Harry.

"Presently," replied the other. "I want the bank to grow rich before I assail it. I will show our friends how to play basset, and give those fellows," glancing at the *tailleur* and *croupier*, "a lesson."

"I am glad to find you so confident, Mr. Law," said Archer. "When I first handled a card and rattled a dice-box, I made sure of winning, but I'm not so sanguine now."

"Success in play may be rendered matter of certainty by calculation," rejoined Law. "I once played badly myself, but I don't do so now. Will you go halves in my winnings or losses, Sir Harry?"

"With pleasure," replied the other. "If I have not entire faith in your skill, I have a strong con-

viction that fortune will favour you. Therefore, play for us both, and stake what you please."

"Don't be uneasy," said Law. "You won't regret the partnership."

At this juncture, Charlie Carrington, who had sat down at the tapis vert, got up, railing loudly at his ill luck, and Law instantly took his place. Sir Harry drew near to watch the Scotsman's play, and, surprised at the indifference he exhibited, began to think he had not made a very prudent arrangement. However, he soon altered his opinion, for though Law appeared as unconcerned as ever, and even continued to chat gaily, he went on without a single reverse from his *couche* of twenty guineas to *trente et le va*.

When this large stake was won, Sir Harry could not contain his excitement, but Law remained wholly unmoved, and, though the company began now to crowd round him, and every eye was bent upon him, he appeared less interested than any

one present in the issue of the game, making it evident that he not only possessed great skill, but extraordinary coolness.

"Are you going on?" whispered Sir Harry.

"To be sure," replied Law, with a smile. "I have done nothing yet."

"Nothing!" exclaimed Sir Harry. "The deuce you haven't! Why, you have won six hundred guineas. I shall be quite content with my share of it."

"I'll stop, if you desire it," replied Law, without manifesting any emotion; "but it is a pity not to follow it up. You may as well have six hundred as three."

"Well, do just as you please," rejoined Sir Harry. "What a devil of a fellow he is!" he added to Carrington. "He plays just as coolly as if he were staking a few crowns. Why, the very tailleur can scarcely deal the cards. Look how his hand shakes."

"He knows he's doomed," laughed Law.

"By Heaven! there never was such luck!" cried Carrington.

"It's not luck, but good play," said Law. "I told you I should win. I always do win."

"The deuce you do!" said Carrington. "I wish you'd give me a lesson. It's just the contrary with me. I always lose."

"I am giving you a lesson now, if you can profit by it," replied Law. "*Soixante et le va*," he called out to the *tailleur*.

This challenge, which, notwithstanding the high play that went on there, had rarely been uttered in that room, caused general excitement both among the lookers-on and the punters, and the *tailleur* was perceptibly agitated. He called out in a tremulous voice, "Ace wins, five loses, knave wins, seven loses, ten wins——"

"Then we win—that is, Mr. Law wins!" cried Sir Harry, unable to contain himself.

"Not yet, Sir Harry," observed Law, quietly.

"The cards must be dealt a second time. But we *shall* win."

And so they did. After much shuffling of the cards, and agonising slowness in dealing them, the pallid *tailleur* faltered out "Ten wins," and then sank back in his chair with a groan.

On this declaration Law arose, with a slight smile of triumph on his countenance, to receive the congratulations of his new friends, all of whom pressed eagerly round him. Sir Harry shook him cordially by the hand, and said,

"On my soul, Mr. Law, I want words to thank you. You've made me above six hundred pounds richer than I was when I entered this room, and my gratitude ought to be proportionate to the obligation. Command me in any way you please. I am yours for ever."

"Don't say a word more, Sir Harry," rejoined Law. "I am happy in being able to convince you, and the gentlemen to whom you have made me known, that you may confide in me."

"I will embark my whole fortune in any scheme you may propose," said Sir Harry. "And I think you may count upon my friends."

"Mr. Law may count upon me," cried Charlie Carrington.

"And upon all of us," chorused the others.

Of course there was no more play, the bank being broken, and indeed it could not quite meet Law's demands upon it. Mr. White, the keeper of the coffee-house, was then summoned by Sir Harry, and the money deposited with him.

III.

OF THE QUARREL BETWEEN BEAU WILSON AND CHARLIE
CARRINGTON.

"Is not that Beau Wilson?" inquired Law, calling Sir Harry's attention to an old gentleman, richly clad, and of very courtly appearance, who had just entered the room.

"Yes, that's old Angus, sure enough," replied Sir Harry. "But how the deuce did you recognise him?"

"Merely from your accurate description," replied Law, with a smile. "But do me the favour to present me to him."

"With the greatest pleasure," replied Sir Harry.
"Come along."

Divining their object, Mr. Wilson advanced to meet them, and his lameness was then very evident. Unquestionably, the old gentleman merited the designation he had gained, for his attire was of the gayest, and hardly in accordance with his years. He was dressed in a flowered velvet coat embroidered with gold, and cut in the last fashion, while his waistcoat was of rich silk sprigged with gold, and his long ruffles of the finest Brussels lace. Pearl-coloured silk hose, rolled above the knee, cased his shrunken though still shapely legs, and a well-powdered peruke flowed over his rounded shoulders. His lameness rendering support indispensable, he carried a crutch-handled cane.

Though long past his meridian, and derided as an antiquated beau by the fops of the day, Angus Wilson was in very good preservation, and, judging from appearances, likely to last for several

years to come. Years ago, when page to Charles the Second, and in the bloom of youth, he was no doubt handsome, but little remained of his former good looks. His nose was aquiline, his brows black and bushy, and his eyes surprisingly quick and penetrating. Moreover, his teeth, which he took care to display, were still white and even. His scrupulously shaved cheeks and chin looked perfectly blue. The hand of time had somewhat reduced his stature by embowing his shoulders, but even now that he was thus robbed of a few inches, he was scarcely below the middle height.

When Law was presented to him by Sir Harry, the old beau manifested great pleasure at the introduction, and after the first civilities had passed, said with great earnestness, "I shall be delighted to see you at my house in Berkeley-square, Mr. Law, whenever you will honour me with a visit. His Grace the Duke of Argyle and the Marquis of Tweeddale have both acquainted me by letter with your intention of passing a few months in

Town, and I need not say that I will do my best to make your time pass agreeably. They both allude to your plan of a National Bank—of which I had heard, of course—eulogise the scheme, and reprobate its rejection by the Scotch Parliament. They also advert to some other project which you have in petto, but we will speak of this at a more convenient opportunity. Something may be done with her Majesty's ministers. I flatter myself that I have some little interest, and all I have shall be exerted in your behalf."

Law was expressing his warmest acknowledgments, when Mr. Wilson interrupted him by saying, "Enough, my good sir. Thank me when I have served you. So you have signalised your entrance into Town life by a coup de maître—have broken the bank, eh? Be ruled by me, and stop with your first success. Basset is a ruinous game, as several of the gentlemen here present can testify. 'Tis a modification of the old Royal Oak Lottery, which decoyed so many pigeons to the

net in the days of thy royal master, Charles the Second. For my own part, I have long forsworn play, and never now touch cards or dice."

"Because you have lost the capacity for enjoyment, that is no reason why you should debar us from it, who are in the heyday of youth," observed Charlie Carrington, impertinently. "The passion for play, like all other passions, except that of avarice, dies out with age. In thirty or forty years' time Mr. Law will give up basset and hazard, or basset and hazard will give up him. He may, perhaps, console himself for the deprivation by a young wife."

"I trust I may be so fortunate," remarked Law, noticing with some uneasiness the cloud gathering on the old beau's countenance.

"There are some people upon whom all counsel is thrown away," remarked Wilson, glancing contemptuously at Carrington; "but I do not concern myself with such fools, save to chastise them if they trouble me."

"Then it is for that purpose you carry a cane, and not from lameness, as we have hitherto supposed?" observed the young man, with a sneer.

"I carry a sword as well as a cane, sir," retorted Wilson, sternly.

"Pshaw! you are too old to use a sword—better keep to the stick," said Carrington, in a taunting tone. "You must have slept ill after the masquerade last night, and have got up in a bad humour. No matrimonial altercation occurred, I trust, at breakfast? I should really be concerned if I have unwittingly been the cause of any misunderstanding between so amiable a couple."

"Hold your peace, sir, or by Heaven! I will strike you to the earth," cried Wilson, goaded to fury, and raising his cane.

He might have carried out the threat if his arm had not been seized by Law, while Sir Harry and Bagot threw themselves between him and the object of his wrath.

"No necessity to make a disturbance here, Mr.

Wilson," observed Carrington, coolly. "If this is not a mere ebullition of temper, likely to subside as quickly as it rose, and you are really desirous of a hostile meeting with me, it can be arranged without more ado."

"Be it so," replied Wilson. "Your impertinence shall not pass unpunished. Mr. Law," he added, turning to him, "you are almost a stranger to me, but I know you to be a man of honour. Allow me to claim your services in this affair."

"I cannot refuse the request, sir," replied Law. "Indeed, I most readily accede to it, in the hope of effecting a reconciliation——"

"Reconciliation is impossible, Mr. Law," rejoined Wilson, peremptorily. "I will accept no apology. The meeting must take place."

"Of course it must," rejoined Carrington. "I promise myself the pleasure of cutting Mr. Wilson's throat. Sir Harry, I know I may count upon your friendship. All I ask is, that the meeting be not delayed beyond to-morrow morning."

"I am as impatient as yourself, sir," said Wilson, "and shall breakfast better after an airing in Hyde Park."

"You will never eat another breakfast, if my hand does not fail me," said Carrington. "Pray recommend Mrs. Wilson not to wait for you—or I will call upon her after the meeting."

The old beau did not deign to notice the impertinence.

"Do me the favour to let me know what arrangements you make for me, Mr. Law," he said. "You will find me on the promenade near the basin of water in Hyde Park an hour hence. I will remain there till you come."

"A word before you go, Mr. Wilson," said Carrington. "If you have not made your will, I counsel you to do so without delay, and leave all your property to your wife."

"A truce to this ill-timed jesting, Charlie," observed Sir Harry.

"Let the puppy snarl on," said Wilson. "I will silence him effectually anon." And bowing formally to the company, he limped out of the room.

"By my faith I was not jesting, Sir Harry," said Carrington, as soon as Wilson was gone. "I have a prodigious interest in the old beau's will, since I mean to make Mrs. Wilson a widow, and out of gratitude she must needs bestow her hand upon me. Au revoir, messieurs." And he too made his bow and departed.

It was then settled between Sir Harry and Mr. Law that the meeting should take place in a retired part of Hyde Park at nine next morning; but Law being entirely unacquainted with the locality, Sir Harry proposed that they should drive to the Park forthwith and select the ground.

Accordingly, they called a coach, and proceeded in it to Hyde Park Corner, where they alighted, and passing through the gates, shaped their course

across the turf till they came to a group of trees, near which was a clear piece of ground, very well adapted to their purpose.

"This spot will suit us exactly, Mr. Law," observed Sir Harry, after they had examined it. "Make these trees your mark, and you cannot miss it. Notwithstanding my principal's bloodthirsty intentions, I trust the affair may not have a fatal termination. Indeed, I am by no means sure that Carrington will have the best of it. The old beau is a very skilful swordsman, and just as cool and collected as Charlie is rash and hot-headed."

"As far as I can judge, I think the chances are in Mr. Wilson's favour," said Law. "In addition to the skill which you say he possesses, he has certainly the quicker eye of the two, a steady hand, and strong wrist. The old man is full of vigour, with muscles like iron. Depend upon it he will prove no despicable antagonist. Besides, he has an affront to avenge, so Mr. Carrington had better look to himself."

IV.

BELINDA AND LADY KATE.

THEY then turned to other topics, and continued chatting together till they reached the "Ring," as the drive round the sheet of water on the Kensington side of Hyde Park was even then denominated. Of course at the date of our story there were neither the numerous brilliant equipages nor the throng of gay equestrians of both sexes to be seen as now-a-days in the same region; but still the "Ring" was the most fashionable drive in Town, and every grand gilt coach found its way thither. Moreover, there was a very agreeable pro-

menade by the side of the water, and on fine days the fair occupants of the carriages usually got out to take an hour's exercise there, and at the same time display their finery and personal charms.

At the hour when Law and Sir Harry approached the "Ring," the road was full of coaches, many of which were as richly gilt and as magnificently appointed as my Lord Mayor's state coach, and would put to shame our plain modern vehicles. The coachmen and footmen appertaining to these gorgeous carriages were as fine as gold lace, silk, powder, and costly liveries could make them. Among the long line of superb equipages drawn up near the basin, Law noticed one richer than all the rest, and to which six splendid horses were attached, and learnt to his surprise that it belonged to Mrs. Wilson.

"No duchess has so handsome a coach as Belinda," observed Sir Harry, with a smile, "and very few have richer jewels. She has only to ask and have. Old Angus can refuse her nothing,

and would ruin himself to gratify her slightest whim. But she must be on the promenade, so you will see her, and judge whether we have over-rated her personal attractions."

Forcing their way through a phalanx of gorgeously-arrayed footmen, who appeared to guard the promenade from vulgar intruders, they joined the gay throng sauntering along the margin of the water. Sir Harry met numerous acquaintances, and pointed out several beauties and distinguished personages to his companion. Law, from his handsome exterior, gallant bearing, and gay attire, attracted general attention, and frequent inquiries as to who he was were addressed to Sir Harry. Owing to repeated stoppages they moved on somewhat slowly, and had scarcely proceeded a hundred yards, when Law descried Beau Wilson coming towards them from the opposite direction. The old gentleman was limping along between two ladies, both of whom were young, exquisitely attired, and surpassingly beautiful. Both,

indeed, were so beautiful, that Law, fairly perplexed, and unable to guess which was Belinda, applied for information on the point to Sir Harry.

"The lady on the old beau's left is his wife," replied Archer. "The other is Belinda's cousin, Lady Kate Knollys, whom some people think quite as charming as Mrs. Wilson herself—but I am not of that opinion. Lady Kate is a widow—so you may have a chance with her, Mr. Law, if you are so minded. She is the third daughter of the Earl of Banbury, and married a Mr. Senor, whom nobody knew anything about, save that he was rich—but he very considerably died within a year of their marriage."

"She is certainly very handsome," observed Law, "as indeed is Mrs. Wilson. On my soul, I can scarcely tell which I admire most."

"You will be better able to decide anon," rejoined Sir Harry, with a laugh.

Both ladies, as we have just said, were beauties, but in totally different styles; Belinda being

a brunette with large black eyes, jetty brows, and a rich glowing dark complexion, ruby lips, and pearly teeth. Her raven tresses were magnificent, but spoiled by powder. The powder, however, gave piquancy and effect to her dark eyes, brows, and warm complexion. Lady Kate's charms were of another order. Eyes of tender blue, a delicately fair skin, pencilled eyebrows describing a perfect arch, a forehead white as Parian marble, a cheek that dimpled when she smiled, and light locks, formed part of her attractions; but she had many others that we cannot pause to particularise. Both ladies were in the full *éclat* of their charms, and both, it is almost needless to say, dressed to perfection, in silk and brocade, with furbelowed scarves, laced commodes, and diamond *solitaires*. Both carried fans; and both wore patches; but neither, we are happy to say, had sought to heighten the beauty of her complexion by paint. The two fair cousins were nearly of a height—neither of them being very tall—and both

were slender and graceful of figure, their slim waists being charmingly defined by long bodices.

Such were the two lovely creatures who now dazzled the eyes of Mr. Law, so bewildering him, that, although not usually overcome by the sight of a pretty woman, he had scarcely recovered from his confusion when the party came up, and Beau Wilson stepping forward, formally presented him to the ladies. The smiles with which he was greeted at once dispelled his confusion, and the sweet accents of the low-voiced Lady Kate fell like music on his ear, and almost instantaneously found a way to his heart. However, it was Belinda who first addressed him. "We are charmed to make your acquaintance, Mr. Law," she said. "We have heard such wonderful accounts of you from the Duke of Argyle and the Marquis of Tweeddale, both of whom have written to my husband, describing you as the most extraordinary arithmetician, mathematician, and financier

of the age, that we have been dying to behold you."

"Mr. Law doesn't in the least resemble the picture I had painted of him in imagination," remarked Lady Kate Knollys. "He will forgive my saying that he has more the air of a man of fashion than of science."

"Your ladyship is excessively obliging," replied Law. "I am gratified by the compliment, because having acquired all the knowledge I care to obtain, I now only desire to make a figure in society. But though your ladyship may not credit it, I have worked hard."

"Oh! I will believe anything you tell me, Mr. Law, however incredible it may sound, even if you declare that you have spent whole days and nights in the most abstruse studies."

"Such is the literal fact," he replied; "but henceforward I mean to devote my days and nights to amusement."

"I am glad to hear it," observed Belinda. "All the men of science I have known have been ugly, dull, ill-bred, awkward, and, shall I venture to say it, terrible bores. Now I don't think, Mr. Law, that you will prove a bore."

Lady Kate Knollys looked as if she didn't think so either.

"You forget, madam, that the Duke of Argyle described Mr. Law as a very accomplished and very agreeable man, as well as a person of extraordinary scientific attainments," interposed Beau Wilson. "You have travelled a good deal, I believe, Mr. Law?"

"Merely in Holland," he replied. "I resided for some years in Amsterdam, in order to investigate the mysterious operations of the great Dutch Bank, and during the time I contrived to penetrate all its secrets."

"I fear you didn't find the Dutch frows very handsome, Mr. Law," remarked Sir Harry.

"Not to compare with our own charming

countrywomen, of course," replied Law; "but still some of them are extremely good looking. But I own that I didn't bestow much thought upon them, my time being fully occupied."

"With banking operations, of course," laughed Belinda. "But as those mysterious transactions don't interest us, we won't seek for any revelations concerning them. You must dine with us to-day, Mr. Law—I won't take any refusal, for you can have no engagement—and we'll take you afterwards to the Haymarket to see the 'Constant Couple'—my husband and myself are called the 'Constant Couple,' I ought to tell you. You'll be charmed with Wilks in *Sir Harry Wildair*, and Mrs. Oldfield is an enchanting *Lady Lurewell*."

Law having bowed assent, she turned to Sir Harry, and gave him a similar invitation, but he excused himself, pleading a prior engagement. They then continued their promenade by the water, and during the walk Sir Harry devoted himself so exclusively to Lady Kate Knollys, that

Law could not help thinking that he was by no means as indifferent to her ladyship's attractions as he had stated. Be this as it might, whether from coquetry, or some other motive, Lady Kate seemed anxious to talk to Mr. Law; but she could not accomplish her object, since he was engrossed by Belinda, who had now taken complete possession of him. Beau Wilson, whose lameness did not allow him to take much exercise, now sat down on a bench, and left them to themselves; and the little restraint he imposed upon his wife being thus removed, she became more lively and bewitching than ever, and Law was perfectly enraptured with her.

After an hour spent in this manner, Belinda thought it time to go home, so summoning the old beau, they proceeded to the spot where the carriage was stationed. On arriving there, they found a valet standing near the coach, who, bowing respectfully to Belinda, handed her a note. On opening it, and glancing at its contents, her cheek

flushed angrily, and giving the note to her husband, she said to the man, "Tell your master that Mr. Wilson will send him an answer." On this the valet bowed and departed.

"'Tis from that audacious coxcomb, Carrington," observed the old beau, in a whisper to Law. "He begs permission to wait upon my wife at noon to-morrow."

"Insolent puppy!" exclaimed Law, who was now, in his turn, becoming jealous of Carrington. "You will put it out of his power to do so."

Beau Wilson smiled grimly, and signed to Law to get into the carriage.

Mr. Wilson's mansion in Berkeley-square, whither Law was now driven, was large and magnificently furnished. The entrance-hall was full of powdered lacqueys, amongst whom were a couple of black pages, dressed in Oriental costume. No other guests being invited, our friends formed a pleasant *partie carrée*. The dinner was perfect. The old beau, being somewhat of a gourmand,

kept a first-rate French cook, and the wines were just as good as the dishes. The champagne circulated freely. Belinda was in high spirits, and seemed bent upon completing her conquest of Law. Strange to say, the old beau manifested no sort of displeasure at his wife's almost undisguised flirtation with their handsome guest. But Lady Kate Knollys appeared annoyed at it.

As soon as dinner was over, the party set off to the Haymarket Theatre, where Law, who had never seen Mrs. Oldfield, was charmed with her grace and beauty, as well as with her admirable acting. At the close of the performances, as he handed Belinda to her carriage, she told him that she hoped to see a great deal of him during his stay in Town, to which he could not fail to make a suitable answer—and was about to add a few words of rather more passionate import, when he caught Lady Kate's eye fixed somewhat reproachfully upon him—and desisted. The old beau, however, cordially seconded his wife's invitation,

and Law had to repeat his expressions of obligation. Before getting into the carriage, Wilson inquired in an under tone at what hour of the morning he had appointed the meeting, and being informed, said he would be ready.

The coach then drove away, and as Law proceeded to the Hummums, he felt that the enchantress, to whose fascinations he had been subjected, had cast a spell over him so potent that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to shake it off. He could not banish her image from his thoughts, and it haunted him in his dreams.

V.

THE DUEL IN HYDE PARK.

NEXT morning Law arose before seven, and as soon as he had completed his toilette, he bade his valet bring him his mantle and a couple of swords, which done, he sallied forth with the swords under his cloak, called a coach, and drove to Berkeley-square. Sir Harry having promised that a surgeon should be in attendance on the field, he did not give himself any concern on that score.

On arriving at Mr. Wilson's habitation, he found the old beau waiting for him, and they proceeded together to Hyde Park. On the way

they talked together of indifferent matters, as if both were anxious to avoid allusion to the business on hand, but at last Law remarked,

“I hope you have kept your hand in practice, Mr. Wilson. If so, I shall have no doubt as to the result of the encounter.”

“I have not been at a fencing-school, or handled a foil in private, for several years,” replied Beau Wilson; “but I have not forgotten how to use a sword, as Charles Carrington shall find. I have fought several duels, and had determined not to fight another, but this has been forced upon me. If I did not punish this impertinent coxcomb, I should be subject to like annoyance from his friends. I am too much a man of the world, Mr. Law, not to be aware that I am ridiculed—justly ridiculed, perhaps—for marrying a young wife of great personal attractions, like Belinda. But the ridicule does not disturb me. Were I forty years younger I could not be more passionately in love with my wife than I am at sixty-five, and

though the assertion may savour of vanity, I believe she loves me in return. At the time when I was page to my royal master, Charles the Second, old Sir John Denham, the poet, who had laughed at marriage all his life, became desperately enamoured of a lovely young creature, and wedded her. Everybody laughed at him, and I among the rest, and we all thought the beautiful Lady Denham fair game, and sought an opportunity of making love to her. Whether she really favoured any one I can't pretend to say, but Sir John thought so, and terribly avenged the supposed injury to his honour."

"He poisoned his wife, I believe," remarked Law.

"He did; and I would do likewise, were I wronged in the same manner," rejoined Wilson, sternly. "I blamed Sir John Denham then, but I don't blame him now. I know what jealousy is."

"'Sdeath! sir," cried Law, alarmed at the serious tone in which the old beau spoke, "you don't

entertain any suspicions of your wife? If so, for Heaven's sake cast them off, as I am quite sure they must be groundless."

"I entertain no suspicion, sir," said Wilson, moodily. "If I did——" And his countenance grew dark, and he became silent.

Law made no attempt to continue the conversation. A feeling of horror almost struck him dumb, and nothing more passed between them till they reached the entrance to Hyde Park, where they alighted, and set out in the direction of the place of rendezvous.

The old beau's lameness caused them to proceed very slowly. The morning was beautiful, all nature seeming to rejoice in the bright sunshine. A herd of deer were couched near the group of trees towards which they were steering, and some cattle were quietly grazing at a little distance.

The emotions inspired by the contemplation of this peaceful scene made the errand on which they were engaged appear peculiarly distasteful

to Law, but he gave no utterance to his sentiments.

“How charming the park is at this early hour,” observed the old beau, “and how fresh and exhilarating the air feels! It quite renovates my youth. I shall come here often of a morning—but no! I cannot. We keep such abominably late hours—plays, drums, ridottos, masked balls, and the devil knows what besides!—night after night—night after night.”

“Your young wife must be amused, sir,” said Law. “But we shall be first on the field. Those deer would not be lying yonder if any one were near.”

“True,” replied Wilson, “but we are not quite there yet. I must halt for a moment. My leg pains me excessively.”

While they were thus pausing, Law noticed three persons coming from the Kensington side of the Park, and pointed them out to the old beau, who said,

"Ay, there they are. But they must wait for me, or come on here, for I've fallen dead lame, and scarce think I can move a step farther. Lend me your arm, sir, and I'll try to hobble on."

With Law's assistance, the old beau limped slowly on, but he was obliged to stop every fifty yards, and long before he reached the trees, the deer had been roused, and their places occupied by Carrington and his second — the person with them being the surgeon.

As Mr. Wilson approached, his opponent advanced to meet him, and after a cold and formal salutation had been exchanged between them, retired, and prepared for the combat, while the old beau, with Law's aid, proceeded to divest himself of his velvet coat, waistcoat, and laced cravat.

The sight of his adversary appeared to have restored the old man to his pristine vigour. His eye blazed, his lameness forsook him, and he stood more erect than he had done for years. Law, who had begun to have some misgivings con-

cerning him, was astounded at the sudden change, and conceived better hopes.

Meanwhile, the swords having been measured by the seconds, a weapon was delivered to each combatant, who proceeded to try the blade. Satisfied with the essay, they approached each other, saluted, and the old beau beat the appeal with as firm a foot as his young antagonist. In another moment they were engaged.

The conflict was of brief duration, but sufficiently long to show that, though Carrington was a skilful and active swordsman, he was no match for so wary an antagonist as Beau Wilson, who, moreover, displayed a quickness and precision that could scarcely have been expected from his years. The old man dexterously parried every thrust made at him, and after a *lounge en carte* over the arm, returned in *seconde* with such rapidity and force, that his point pierced his adversary's right side, inflicting a severe though not dangerous wound.

"I think you have had enough, sir," said Beau

Wilson, as the blood poured down Carrington's breast, and the sword dropped from his grasp.

At the same time the seconds and the surgeon rushed to the wounded man's assistance.

VI.

A CAUTION.

AFTER rendering all the aid he could to Charlie Carrington, who, as soon as his wound was bound up, was conveyed by the surgeon and Sir Harry to a carriage in waiting for them at a short distance from the place of encounter, Law accompanied Mr. Wilson to Berkeley-square — the old beau insisting upon taking him home with him to breakfast.

If Belinda had appeared charming overnight in full dress, she looked far more captivating in Law's eyes in a very becoming morning toilette. She

affected some surprise at seeing the early visitor; but her smiles, and the slight blush that suffused her cheek, showed that he was by no means unwelcome.

"I hope breakfast is ready, my dear," observed her husband. "We have been walking in Hyde Park, and the morning air is very appetising. By-the-by, we met a friend of yours during our stroll—Charlie Carrington."

"Indeed!" she exclaimed. "Was it a chance encounter?"

"Well, perhaps he might have heard from his friend, Sir Harry, of our intention of being there—I can't say—but certain it is we found him, in a quiet spot near the trees; and the opportunity was too good to be neglected—ha! ha!—you understand, my dear—ha! ha!"

"Yes, I can't very well mistake your meaning, sir," she returned. "You have been fighting a duel with Mr. Carrington, and I must own I'm not sorry for it, since you have come off the victor."

He is a presumptuous coxcomb, and deserves punishment."

"He will have a fortnight for serious reflection, and will no doubt be more discreet in future," remarked Beau Wilson. "But let us to breakfast. I don't know how you feel, Mr. Law, but I am prodigiously hungry. An affair of this sort every morning would be very beneficial to my health."

With this they repaired to the dining-room, where an elegant repast was set forth, to which the old beau and his guest did ample justice. Before long, Lady Kate joined the party. A rich *négligée* in which she was attired suited her to admiration, and the sweet smiles she bestowed on Law on greeting him rather shook Belinda's influence over the unstable Scot.

During breakfast, the old beau proposed a number of plans for Law's amusement, saying that Belinda should carry him with her that evening to Lady Belhaven's rout, and next night to Lady Haversham's drum, and the night after that to

Lady Sidley's masked ball—and so on—mentioning several other parties.

Breakfast over, they repaired to the drawing-room, where Belinda soon contrived to detach Law from Lady Kate, and engage him in a quiet chat with herself.

Lady Kate took up some work, the old beau had recourse to a book, and thus things went on for an hour, when Wilson, tired of reading, and perhaps thinking it might be well to put an end to his wife's tête-à-tête with Law, went up to the sofa on which they were seated, and, apologising for the interruption, inquired of Belinda if she was going out in the carriage, and receiving an answer in the affirmative, he begged she would do him the favour to take him and Mr. Law to White's. Belinda readily assented, and calling to Lady Kate, bade her get ready for a drive.

"Pray excuse me, my dear," replied her ladyship, over whose sunny features a slight cloud had settled. "I cannot go out this morning."

"Eh day! what's the matter?" cried the other. "If you have got the vapours, a drive in the Park will be the best thing in the world to disperse them. Besides, I want your opinion about some dresses that Madame Mechlin is about to make for me. She has got a new assortment of lace, silks, and brocades. And then we'll go to Brimboriou's to look at his jewellery, for I must have another diamond necklace and ear-rings. Then, if we've time, we'll call at Nankin's and buy some old china. Nankin has the tiniest teacups you ever beheld—perfect loves! and the most stupendously large jars. Then I've twenty visits at least to pay, and I never can get through half of them unless you assist me. So you must come with me, Kate. I'll take no refusal. After we've done shopping, and paid all our visits, we'll go to the Mall in Saint James's Park, where the gentlemen can join us. Won't you, Mr. Law?" she added, casting a bewitching look at him.

Of course he bowed assent, but Lady Kate shook her head gravely, and said,

"Indeed you must excuse me, Belinda. Neither diamonds, dresses, nor old china—though I am passionately fond of them all—can tempt me forth to-day. My head aches frightfully," she added, pressing a laced handkerchief to her snowy brow.

"Your headache must have come very suddenly, dear, for you didn't complain at breakfast," remarked Belinda, sceptically.

"It has been coming on for the last hour," rejoined Lady Kate, somewhat significantly.

"Your ladyship must let me prescribe for you," said Beau Wilson; "or perhaps Mr. Law will be able to suggest a remedy."

"Pray smell this," said Law, producing a small silver vinaigrette, and giving it to her.

"It is indeed reviving," she replied; "but I must adhere to my resolution, Belinda. You can amuse yourself very well without me."

"I shall try, if you really won't go," rejoined Belinda, "but I must say you are monstrously dis-obliging."

She then quitted the room, and the old beau went with her, leaving Lady Kate and Law alone together.

"I am sorry your ladyship is indisposed," observed Law, taking a chair near her. "But I should never have guessed, from your looks, that you are unwell."

"Looks are deceptive, Mr. Law," rejoined Lady Kate, coldly. "I place little faith in them."

"You surprise me. I should have thought your ladyship a very good physiognomist. For my own part, I persuade myself that I can read a character at a glance."

"A very enviable faculty, and I wish I possessed it," she rejoined, listlessly. "I am curious to know what you think of me?"

"I should say you possess a thousand amiable qualities—with as few defects as can fall to the

lot of a daughter of Eve. You are sincere, generous, warm-hearted, affectionate, devoted in friendship—I dare not say devoted in love—but—but——”

“But what?” she cried, with somewhat more animation. “Pray give the dark side of the picture.”

“Nay, there is no dark side to it. I was going to say that you have a tendency to jealousy.”

“There you are right, Mr. Law. I cannot lay claim to the good qualities you endow me with, but I know from experience that I am jealous. My jealousy, however, is of a very mild kind, and would never, I hope, be exhibited in the dreadful way in which the passion is displayed on the stage. I should never poison a faithless husband, or cause him to be assassinated. Such things *are* done, though, in real life.”

“Not often in our time,” observed Law, with a laugh. “We are too sensible to allow ourselves to be carried to such absurd extremes. Society

would be decimated if every wife resorted to such violent expedients of getting rid of an inconstant spouse. I won't say what would happen if men were barbarous enough to treat their wives in a similar manner. Fortunately, married folk soon grow indifferent to each other, and trifling peccadilloes on either side are easily overlooked."

"What you say is very true, I fear, Mr. Law," replied Lady Kate, with a sigh. "But there are exceptions. I myself know a person, who, if he suspected his wife of infidelity, would unhesitatingly resort to the most terrible means of vengeance. As the lady to whom that gentleman is united is somewhat heedless in her conduct, I live in constant dread of such a catastrophe. Should you ever come in contact with the couple in question, Mr. Law, I bid you beware. Be assured you will have to deal with a very crafty and very dangerous person in the husband."

"I shall not neglect your ladyship's caution," said Law, who at once perceived the drift of her

observations. "But if I should get into 'a difficulty, I must trust to you to extricate me from it."

"Nay, I cannot help you," she rejoined. "I have warned you—that is all I can do."

VII.

A SECOND VISIT TO WHITE'S.—MR. LAW WINS MORE MONEY
AT PLAY.

THEIR conversation was here interrupted by the return of Beau Wilson and his wife; upon which Lady Kate arose, and said, in a lively tone,

“You will think me very changeable, Belinda—but if you will allow me, I *will* go out with you. My headache has entirely vanished.”

“I am delighted to hear it,” replied Belinda, whose looks rather contradicted her assertion. “But what a sudden improvement, my dear!”

“Yes; I can’t account for it,” said Lady Kate, smiling.

"But I can," observed Beau Wilson, glancing at Law. "I know who has performed the marvelous cure—ha! ha!"

"I only wish her ladyship's recovery could be justly attributed to me," said Law. "But I have really no share in it."

"I'll take Lady Kate's opinion in preference to yours," cried the old beau. "What says your ladyship? Is not Doctor Law the physician who has dispelled the vapours?"

And he laughed very heartily, until checked by his wife, who said, in a tone of pique,

"I really can't see the joke, sir. Surely Kate may change her mind without so much fuss being made about it. I have changed mine, and shan't go out this morning."

"Not go out!" exclaimed Lady Kate; "and give up the call at Mechlin's, and the diamonds, and the old china, and the twenty visits, and the walk in the Mall, eh?"

"You shall pay the visits for me, my dear,"

rejoined Belinda, flinging herself upon the sofa. "I should only be de trop during the walk in the Mall."

"Nay, madam, let me entreat you to go," said Law, with an imploring look. "The whole pleasure of the morning will be destroyed if you remain at home."

"Well, if you urge me I cannot refuse compliance," she rejoined.

This difficulty being got over, Lady Kate withdrew, and presently reappeared, having made a slight change in her attire. The carriage being announced at the same moment, the whole party entered it, and were driven in the first instance to White's, where the gentlemen alighted, and the ladies went on to the milliner's, to examine her stuffs and dresses.

Entering the coffee-house, Law and the old beau found a knot of young men, to whom Sir Harry was recounting the hostile meeting of the

morning. On perceiving Wilson, he immediately stopped, and, advancing towards him, said,

"You will be glad, I think, to hear, sir, that your adversary is doing well. The surgeon assures me he will be out again in less than a fortnight."

"I am pleased to hear it, Sir Harry," returned Beau Wilson. "I only meant to give him a scratch—nothing more, on my honour."

"That I fully believe, sir. I have just been telling these gentlemen that you had Charlie's life at your disposal, and that he ought to thank you for sparing him. I have also borne testimony to your honourable conduct throughout the affair. Your courage has never been questioned, Mr. Wilson, but I doubt whether any of us would have displayed equal forbearance under such provocation."

"I am proud of your good opinion, Sir Harry," replied the old beau, bowing. "But let us change

the topic. I have not seen the paper this morning. What news have we from the seat of war?"

"The Duke of Marlborough and Prince Louis of Baden are preparing to attack the Bavarian entrenchments at Schellenberg," replied Sir Harry.

"And the duke will carry them," cried the old beau. "He is victor in every engagement. Nothing can resist him. Excuse me, Mr. Law, while I glance at the details," he added, taking up the *Flying Post*.

"What say you to a game at hazard, Mr. Law?" remarked Sir Harry.

"With all my heart," replied the other.

"What! about to play again?" cried Wilson, looking up from his newspaper. "You're wrong, sir—you're wrong."

"How so?" rejoined Law. "In one respect I'm like the Duke of Marlborough. I always come off a victor."

So saying, he adjourned with his gay companions

to the salon de jeu, leaving Beau Wilson to the undisturbed enjoyment of the *Flying Post*.

More than half an hour elapsed, and Law not making his appearance, the old beau, who had got through the scanty particulars of Marlborough's campaign, began to grow impatient. But he would not go into the play-room. In half an hour more he got up, and was just about to leave the coffee-house, when Sir Harry rushed in, and seeing his intention, begged him to wait a moment, as Mr. Law would be with him almost immediately.

"What the deuce is he about?" cried Wilson, sharply. "Has he lost all his money, that he remains so long at the gaming-table?"

"On the contrary," replied Sir Harry. "He has been winning all before him. But here he comes to answer for himself."

"I am almost sorry to hear of your success, sir," cried Beau Wilson to Law, as the latter entered

the room. "If you had met with a reverse, it might have been of service to you."

"I never do meet with a reverse, Mr. Wilson," replied Law; "and I have played longer now than I intended, to oblige Sir Harry."

"Mr. Law has added another thousand pounds to our fund," observed Archer.

"If you go on in this way, you will speedily grow rich," said Beau Wilson, sarcastically. "But I don't like it—I don't like it."

VIII.

MR. LAW EXPLAINS HIS SYSTEM TO THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH AND THE EARL OF GODOLPHIN.

ATTENDED by Sir Harry and Law, Beau Wilson hobbled down the street, and made for Saint James's Park, observing, as they passed through the gateway between Marlborough House and the palace, "I have not forgotten my promise in regard to the duchess, Mr. Law. I have already written to her, begging permission to present you. I hope she won't hear of your successes at play. A reputation for gambling won't serve you with her grace."

"Don't imagine, sir, that play is an overmaster-

ing passion with me," replied Law. "It is simply an idle pastime, which I indulge in when the whim takes me. I have already said, that by calculation, combined with a certain amount of skill, and above all of coolness, I can almost always win, so that if I deemed such a course consistent with the character of a gentleman, I could very soon realise a large fortune by play."

"You think so?" cried Beau Wilson, shaking his head. "Permit me to doubt it, Mr. Law. I have heard many other persons affirm the same thing. But they were all ruined, and you will share the like fate, if you don't stop in time."

"I don't think so, sir," rejoined Law. "But I have no desire to be distinguished as a successful gambler; at least, on the small scale afforded by tables such as that we have just left. If I must figure as a gamester, let the stakes be millions—the whole wealth of a country—not paltry hundreds, unworthy consideration. Such a game I mean to

play if I can find any government shrewd enough to confide its revenues to my management. You smile, Mr. Wilson, but mine is no chimerical project."

"I will take your word for its merits, sir," said the old beau. "But you will hardly recommend your system to Lord Godolphin by describing it as a game of chance?"

"All financial operations on a grand scale savour of what is popularly called gambling," replied Law; "that is, an apparent hazard must be incurred, though there is none in reality to an enterprising and skilful player. All the financiers whom I have hitherto encountered have been too timid, and not having minds comprehensive enough to grasp the whole of a vast and complex scheme, have seen difficulties and dangers that exist but in imagination."

"I am not a financier," said Wilson; "but it seems to me that a grand and comprehensive measure, which is to treble, or quadruple, the re-

sources of a nation, ought to be free from any reproach of gambling."

"My scheme is as sound and irreproachable as any ever submitted to the world," said Law, "and I believe it will be found without a flaw. Certain I am it will work well, and its results will be astounding. Incredible fortunes will be realised by those who engage in it."

"Recollect that I am to be an extensive shareholder, Mr. Law," cried Sir Harry. "I hold you to your promise."

"You must excuse me if I stand aloof to see how the scheme works," observed the old beau.

"Then you won't make a fortune by the shares," said Law.

By this time they had reached the Mall, which was very full. Fatigued with the walk, Beau Wilson took a seat on a bench, and Law sat down beside him. Sir Harry left them to speak to some acquaintances, and as soon as he was gone, the old beau remarked, in a confidential tone to

his companion, "I'll tell you a secret respecting our friend. He is paying court to Lady Kate Knollys."

"So I conjectured," replied the other. "And a fortunate fellow he will be if he obtains her hand."

"He won't obtain it, and I'll tell you why," remarked the old beau. "Lady Kate has every recommendation but one. She is very handsome, as I need not tell you—very amiable, as you must have discovered—the daughter of one earl and the sister of another—but she has one defect, which will more than counterbalance all these recommendations with Sir Harry, when he finds it out."

"In Heaven's name, what is it?" cried Law. "Is she poor?"

"She has five thousand a year now," replied the old beau. "But it leaves her if she marries again. Now, then, you understand why Sir Harry, who is a fortune-hunter, will fight shy when he ascertains how she is circumstanced. I mean to give

him a hint this very morning. You'll see how his passion will cool."

"He ought to be enchanted to take her without a farthing," cried Law.

"Sir Harry is no such model of disinterested affection," rejoined Wilson. "I'm very much mistaken if he doesn't walk off at the first notice."

Shortly afterwards, Sir Harry rejoined them, and the old beau being sufficiently rested, all three commenced a promenade, taking the direction of Buckingham House, a large mansion terminating the Mall on the west, and occupying the site of the present palace.

While they were walking slowly along, Belinda's superb coach entered the drive on the side of the Mall, and being stopped by Wilson, the ladies alighted from it, and the whole party moved on together.

The Mall at this moment was filled with persons of the highest quality and fashion, and the richness and variety of their dresses, which were of

velvets, silks, and other costly stuffs, contributed not a little to the brilliancy of the scene. But amid that gay throng, which included most of the reigning beauties, Law could discern none that in his opinion surpassed in loveliness the two fair creatures at his side.

In the course of the promenade, Beau Wilson contrived to say a few words in private to Sir Harry, and from that moment a marked change took place in the deportment of the latter towards Lady Kate. Disgusted with his conduct, Law paid her ladyship more attention than he had hitherto done, and she soon made it evident that she preferred him to her mercenary admirer.

Law dined that day in Berkeley-square, and so did Sir Harry—in fact, there was a large dinner-party—and the old beau took care that Lady Kate and the Scot should sit together. Later on in the evening all the company went to Lady Belhaven's rout, which was a very brilliant affair, and it was generally noticed that Mr. Law devoted himself

to Lady Kate Knollys, while Sir Harry, anxious to prove that he had given up all idea of her ladyship, whispered it about that she and Mr. Law were very likely to make a match of it.

On the following day, in pursuance of his promise, Beau Wilson took Law to Marlborough House. The duchess was then in the plenitude of her power, and by the despotic sway which her commanding intellect and imperious manner enabled her to maintain over Queen Anne, might be almost said to hold in her hand the destinies of the kingdom. Though she was now turned forty, the duchess's extraordinary personal attractions were scarcely diminished, while her demeanour was in the highest degree stately and imposing—in fact, perfectly regal. Her reception of Law, on his presentation by Wilson, was exceedingly gracious. Pleased with his graces of person and manner, and submitting to the fascinating influence which he exercised at will, she listened to him with much

interest while he detailed his scheme, and when he had done, said,

“I don’t profess to understand your system entirely, Mr. Law, but it appears to me to be a very bold project, and must be productive of extraordinary results one way or the other. But thus much I will promise you. Your proposition shall be carefully and dispassionately considered by those capable of forming a judgment upon it; and if approved, it shall be adopted.”

“That is all I ask, madam,” replied Law.

After questioning him further, and receiving explanations which appeared sufficiently satisfactory to her, the duchess invited him, with unwonted condescension, to attend her levees, and dismissed him.

Next day, Law was presented by Sir Harry to the Earl of Godolphin, and the prime minister’s reception of him was quite as gracious as the Duchess of Marlborough’s had been: in fact, the duchess had already paved the way for him. As

rapidly and as clearly as he could, Law developed his system to Lord Godolphin. We shall not follow him in his details, as it will be necessary to enter into the subject more fully hereafter, but we may remark that the foundation of his system was Credit, and that he proposed to represent all state revenues and all landed property by paper money of equal value.

“Then you would proscribe gold and silver, Mr. Law,” observed Lord Godolphin, as the other concluded his statement, “and only employ such small metallic currency as must be indispensable in trifling commercial transactions.”

“Such is my design, my lord. On reflecting profoundly on the matter, I am satisfied that precious metals are improperly employed as agents of circulation. Paper money ought only to be used, because it has no intrinsic value. This is the foundation of my economical theory; and though, on the first blush, it may appear illusory, I think I can convince your lordship that it is sound.

By means of paper money, and a system of credit, such as I propose, the circulation would immediately be quadrupled, and since every branch of trade and industry must be immensely stimulated and encouraged, so the prosperity of the country will infallibly be increased in the same ratio."

"You talk very plausibly, I must own, Mr. Law," said Lord Godolphin, smiling. "But I am not quite a convert to your system. I should be disinclined to make the experiment, since its failure must inevitably cause a national bankruptcy. But the plan may, no doubt, prove tempting to an absolute monarch, as it will place the whole wealth of his kingdom in his own hands; and though I must decline it, my conviction is that the project will be adopted—possibly by France. If so, and success attends the measure, you will rank as first financier in Europe."

Law then retired, extremely well pleased with the interview, though it had not led to the result he anticipated.

IX.

BEAU WILSON BELIEVES HIMSELF DUPED.

MR. LAW now became the fashion, and invitations showered upon him from persons of the highest rank. But though amusement was his chief object, he did not devote himself to it exclusively. While passing the afternoon in the Parks, at White's, and at places of fashionable resort, and the nights at the Opera, the play-houses, routs, and masquerades, he spent the mornings in the City, and could be seen regularly in 'Change-alley, and at other places of business,

and was known to have realised considerable sums by well-timed speculations in the public funds, and in foreign stocks. In the City also he made acquaintance with many eminent merchants, by whom he was regarded as a person remarkably skilful in all matters of finance and credit. So highly, indeed, were his abilities esteemed, that a partnership was offered him by a great discount house, and similar overtures were made to him by another large mercantile firm ; but he declined these and other advantageous proposals, having more important objects in view. Not only did he enrich himself by such legitimate speculations as we have mentioned, but he frequented the Groom-Porters', and other gaming-houses, and won large sums of money at faro, basset, lansquenet, and hazard—the same good fortune attending him that had marked his first appearance at White's. Before he had been a month in town, it was stated, by those who seemed to have authority for what they asserted, that he had won more

than twenty thousand pounds. His unvarying success at play naturally occasioned comment, and excited suspicion among the losers; but though he was narrowly watched, no malpractices could be attributed to him. On the contrary, he himself detected and exposed the tricks of certain sharpers who sat down to play with him.

During all this time a close intimacy subsisted between Mr. Wilson and Law, and nothing whatever occurred to interrupt their good understanding. Ordinarily jealous and suspicious, the old beau placed unbounded confidence in his friend. Belinda appeared quite reconciled to the transfer of Law's attentions from herself to Lady Kate, and the latter appeared charmed by the devotion of her handsome admirer. On his part, Law did his best to make himself agreeable to all three. Consulted upon all occasions by husband and wife, he settled all their little differences, and made all things so pleasant, that Mr. Wilson declared he

had never been so happy since his marriage as now.

But there were people malicious enough to assert that Beau Wilson and Lady Kate were both egregiously duped by Behinda and Law, between whom, these censors affirmed, a tender liaison subsisted.

One morning, Beau Wilson entered White's Coffee-house, and at once made his way to a table at which Charlie Carrington, who had long since recovered from his wound, was seated with his companions. The old beau's countenance wore a very stern expression. As he approached, Carrington got up and made him a formal bow. Stiffly returning the salutation, Wilson said, "I received a letter from you this morning, Mr. Carrington, and am come to answer it in person. Do you mean to adhere to the statement therein made?"

"If I did not, I should scarcely have written

the letter, sir," rejoined Carrington, haughtily "All I have said is true, and unfortunately susceptible of proof."

"If it be so——" cried the old beau, with a sudden burst of fury. Then suddenly moderating himself, he added, "Allow me a word with you in private."

"There is no need to retire, sir," rejoined Carrington. "The matter is common talk."

"How say you?—common talk!" cried the old beau, furiously. "You are all vile slanderers thus to sully the reputation of a most virtuous woman, and assail the character of an honourable gentleman. I disbelieve the report—I disbelieve it, I tell you."

"As you please, sir," rejoined Carrington. "If you are willing to be duped, that is your own affair. Your wife, no doubt, is a model of fidelity, and your friend incapable of injuring you. I congratulate you on your easy and philosophic temperament."

"Grant me patience, Heaven!" cried the old beau, trembling with suppressed rage. "Is not this an invention, Sir Harry? Is it not a vile calumny? Say so, that I may force it down its fabricator's throat."

"I would rather you did not appeal to me, Mr. Wilson," rejoined the other; "and I must express my profound regret that Charles Carrington should have written to you on the subject."

"But you discredit the report?—you pronounce it false? Speak, sir, speak!"

But as Sir Harry remained silent, he turned to the others, and said,

"How say you, gentlemen? Do you believe the slanderous tale?"

"Upon my soul, sir, I would rather not answer the question," said Tom Bagot.

"Nor I," added Jerry Ratcliffe.

"I understand," replied Wilson, sinking into a chair. "You all believe it. Give me a glass of water. I feel very faint."

"How can you torture him thus?" observed Sir Harry to Carrington.

"He deserves to suffer," replied the other, in a tone of unconcern. "What could the old fool expect when he married a young wife?"

This remark reached Wilson's ear, and caused him to start instantly to his feet.

"You will have much to answer for in the work you have begun, sir," he said, in a strange tone, to Carrington.

"I am prepared to answer for all I have done, sir," rejoined the other. "But you ought to thank me for the service I have rendered you. Would you rather remain in ignorance of the wrong you are enduring? Would you prefer to be pointed at as a contented wittol?"

"No! no! no!" cried the old beau, with a look of anguish. "If I have been betrayed by the wife whom I adored, and the friend whom I trusted, I would rather know it. Never more

—never more shall I have faith in man or woman.”

“Poh! poh! don’t take it thus, Mr. Wilson,” said Sir Harry. “’Tis an every-day occurrence. You are not the only man who has been deceived by his wife and his best friend.”

“I know it,” cried the old beau, bitterly. “I know that in our hollow and heartless society these perfidies are frequent, that the most sacred ties are constantly broken, and that people only laugh when such things happen.”

“That shows the wisdom of the world, Mr. Wilson,” said Sir Harry. “People laugh because they are indifferent, and because their own turn may come next. You would have done well not to marry at your age, sir. It was scarcely like one, who lived in Charles the Second’s days, and must have known what was the usual fate of elderly gentlemen with pretty wives, to take so imprudent a step.”

"Ay, ay, I dare say Mr. Wilson made love to many a fair dame in his younger days," remarked Tom Bagot, with a laugh — "perhaps to Lady Denham?"

"Why to Lady Denham, sir?" cried the old beau, with sudden fierceness. "Why single out her?"

"Merely because her name occurred to me," replied the other. "But we all know you were a man of gallantry, Mr. Wilson, and did not respect your friend's wife. You cannot expect to be treated better than you treated others. The world has not grown better since you were one-and-twenty."

"It has grown ten thousand times worse," rejoined the old beau, bitterly. "I hear it constantly asserted that the gallants of Charles the Second's time were profligate, but they were nothing to the shameless rakes of the present day."

"Ha! ha! ha! that's all very fine," cried Sir Harry. "But we know better. However, I don't

think society has much improved, and, between ourselves, I don't think it ever *will* improve, for human nature must continue the same. All I desire is, that you should bear the matter philosophically."

The old beau took no notice of the remark, but said, "I suppose this story has become town talk—and is laughed at everywhere—at all the clubs and coffee-houses. We shall have it in the papers next, if they have not got it already."

"I've looked them carefully over this morning," said Jerry Ratchliffe, "but I can find no allusion to it. I dare say there will be something piquant to-morrow."

"Not a doubt of it," said the old beau, bitterly. "Well, I'll give them something to talk about."

"Don't do anything rashly, Mr. Wilson, I beg of you," said Sir Harry.

"Never fear, sir," rejoined the old beau. "I have long resolved upon the course I ought to pursue under circumstances like the present."

"Then you did calculate upon the contingency, sir?" observed Charles Carrington, in a jeering tone.

"I did," replied the old beau, sternly; "and am prepared for it."

And bowing haughtily round he quitted the room.

X.

NOW THE FURIES TOOK POSSESSION OF THE OLD BEAU'S
BREAST.

SCARCELY knowing where he was going, the old beau, on quitting White's Coffee-house, proceeded to St. James's Park, and crossing the Mall, made his way towards Rosamond's Pond, a small basin of water lying on the south of the long canal.

He then struck into the Birdcage-walk, but had scarcely entered it, when he perceived, at the further extremity of the path, two persons, whom he took to be his wife and Law, but, their backs

being towards him, he could not of course distinguish their features. They appeared to be engaged in very tender conversation, and so engrossed were they by each other, that they did not hear his footsteps.

The presence of Law, who had told him he was going to Windsor on that day, was confirmatory of his worst suspicions. His first impulse was to hurry after them, load them with reproaches, and take instant vengeance upon his treacherous friend. But he checked himself, and perceiving they were about to turn, quitted the path, and concealed himself behind a large elm-tree.

A mist came over his eyes, and there was such a strange buzzing in his ears, caused by the sudden rush of blood to the head, that he could neither see nor hear distinctly. However, he made out enough from Law's impassioned speech to convince him he had been wronged; and more than all, he learnt that the amorous pair were to meet

that very night, at a quarter before twelve, in the garden behind his own house in Berkeley-square —Law, it appeared, being provided with a key of the garden-gate.

On acquiring this intelligence, a deadly sickness seized him, and but for the support of the tree he must have fallen to the ground. Even when the sickness had passed, he felt such extraordinary sensations in the head, that he thought he must be going mad; and it would be charity to believe, from what subsequently occurred, that he really was mad.

Staggering into the path, he looked about for the guilty pair, but they had long since disappeared. Hell's torments raged in his breast, and drove him to such a pitch of desperation, that he hurried to the brink of the pool with the intention of ending his woes. Had he thus died, one fearful crime, at least, would have been spared his soul. But the hand of fate arrested him.

After wandering about for some time, he reached

a secluded spot amid the trees, where he thus gave vent to his emotions:

“And she has deceived me!” he cried, in accents that showed how terribly his heart was wrung. “She whom I idolised—for whom I would have laid down my life, has proved false. The priceless treasure is stolen from me. She upon whom I gazed with rapture, whose lightest word was music in my ears, has forsaken me. Had she died, I could have borne the loss—but this blow is worse than death. No agony can be sharper than that I now endure. Were it to last, I must go mad. Nay, methinks I am mad already. My love is turned to hate. My breast is on fire—nothing but blood will quench the flame. Tears and supplications shall not move me. Should she sue for mercy on her bended knees I will not spare her. No—she shall die. As to the villain who has robbed me of this treasure—who has made me the most miserable of men—an object of scorn and derision—I will have his heart’s blood—ay,

though I perish by the hangman's hand. I will have such revenge as shall fright the very fools who mock me now."

Growing somewhat calmer, he quitted the Bird-cage-walk, and went towards Queen-street, where he took a sedan-chair, which conveyed him home. Arrived there, he went at once to his study, giving peremptory orders that he must not be disturbed, and bolting the door, he remained by himself till dinner-time.

How he passed this long interval it would be vain to inquire, but though, when next seen, he had regained his external composure, the fearful turmoil in his breast had not ceased, neither was his vengeful purpose abandoned.

There were no guests that day—the only person at dinner besides himself and his wife being Lady Kate. As may be supposed, the meal passed off in a very dull manner.

At its conclusion, when the servants had retired, Belinda said to her husband,

"How excessively stupid you are to-day, sir. I declare you have not uttered a word during dinner, and your moody looks have checked all conversation on our part. Do be a little more cheerful, I beg of you. 'Tis a pity we haven't dear Mr. Law to enliven us."

"Dear Mr. Law!" muttered Wilson. "Fiends take him!"

"Both Lady Kate and I are quite disconsolate at his absence," pursued Belinda. "But he was obliged to go to Windsor, and I fear we shan't see him till to-morrow."

"Hum!" exclaimed the old beau. "I thought you might see him to-night."

"See him to-night!" she exclaimed, glancing at Lady Kate. "Where?"

"At Lady de Burgh's rout," returned the old beau, looking keenly at her.

"No, he won't be there, or I would go to the party," observed Belinda. "You must make my excuses to Lady de Burgh—say I'm indisposed—

whatever you please. You won't tell stories, for your moodiness at dinner has really made me feel ill."

"And pray make my excuses at the same time, Mr. Wilson," added Lady Kate. "Tell her I have thought it necessary to stay at home with Belinda."

"She, too, is in the plot," muttered Beau Wilson. "But I can't deliver these excuses," he added, aloud. "I don't intend to go to the party myself."

"But you must, sir—I insist upon it," cried Belinda.

"Yes, indeed you must go, Mr. Wilson," said Lady Kate. "It is to be a charming assembly, and you will enjoy it so much."

"If I do go," rejoined Wilson, "I shall only just show myself to Lady de Burgh, and come out."

"You will be good enough to obey my commands, sir," said Belinda, "and those are, that you

do not return before one o'clock—not before one o'clock, mind!”

“One would think you must have some particular reason for desiring me to stay out till that hour,” remarked Wilson.

“So I have, and when you’re in a very good humour I’ll tell it you,” she rejoined. “But you’re a cup too low. A glass of claret will make you feel more cheerful. Finish that bottle, take a nap afterwards, and you’ll be all right. Come to my room before you go to Lady de Burgh’s to say ‘good night.’”

She then quitted the room with Lady Kate, adding laughingly to the latter as they passed through the hall,

“I think I have managed very cleverly to get rid of him.”

“You have managed admirably, my dear,” replied Lady Kate. “But what a strange humour he is in. He has decidedly got a fit of the sul-lens.”

"Oh, it will pass when he has drunk his claret and had his nap," replied Belinda, laughing, as they ascended the staircase.

She little knew what awaited her.

XI.

A TRAGIC INCIDENT.

LEFT alone, Beau Wilson remained for some time a prey to terrible reflections. He neither drank wine, nor sought temporary oblivion in slumber, but held communion with himself in this wise :

“ Shall I do it?—Shall I kill this beautiful, this adorable creature, merely because she cannot love an old man like me? Better—far better destroy myself and let her live. But no! I cannot bear the idea of leaving her for another. That thought is madness. But will it not be revenge enough

if I slay him? Will not his blood wash out the stain upon my honour? No! they must both die. I will not falter in my purpose."

He then arose, and was moving towards the door, when Lady Kate softly entered the room.

"So you are awake and stirring, Mr. Wilson," she said. "I feared to disturb you from your after-dinner nap. Will you spare me a few minutes?"

The old beau offered her a chair, and took one beside her. She then went on: "I am sure you will give me your advice in a matter of great importance to myself. It must have been apparent to you, I think, that my affections have been given for some time to a certain person—you start, as if what I said surprised you—but surely you must be aware that a mutual attachment subsists between myself and Mr. Law."

"Pardon me, Lady Kate," he rejoined. "Till this moment I was not aware of the circumstance. I am sorry—very sorry to hear it."

"Sorry, Mr. Wilson!" she exclaimed. "I expected a very different answer from you. I thought you had the highest opinion of Mr. Law."

"Hear me, Lady Kate," said Wilson, sternly. "If you have any love for this person, you must crush it, whatever the effort may cost you. He is utterly unworthy of you."

"But I cannot retreat," cried Lady Kate. "You force me to speak plainly, sir, and to tell you that I have not only given him my heart, but promised him my hand."

"You have acted most foolishly," rejoined Wilson. "He has deceived you. Do not ask for any explanation, for I cannot give it. But let me say in a word that you can never marry this adventurer—this charlatan—this sharper—this rake. It shall be my business to prevent it."

"The epithets you think fit to apply to a gentleman to whom, as I have told you, I am engaged, prevent any further conversation between us, Mr. Wilson," said Lady Kate, rising proudly from her

seat. "Mr. Law will know how to defend himself from such aspersions, but I did not expect to find you a calumniator."

"Suspend your judgment till to-morrow morning, madam," rejoined Wilson, "and you will find that I am justified in what I have said. I pity you from the bottom of my heart."

"I do not desire your pity, sir," she cried, sharply. "I tell you, that all you have uttered to Mr. Law's disadvantage is unfounded. Let me add, that it is only my affection for Belinda that can induce me to remain another moment under your roof."

"Be not angry with me, I pray you," said the old beau, in a tone so sorrowful that the gentle heart of his listener was touched. "The interest I feel in your ladyship makes me speak thus. It is only within the last few hours that the dark side of Law's character has been revealed to me. Till then I believed him loyal and trustworthy. This morning I should have been as eager as your lady-

ship to defend him—but my eyes are opened now.”

“You alarm me, Mr. Wilson,” cried Lady Kate. “What has come to your knowledge? Tell me, I conjure you. I will listen to you patiently now.”

“Shall I speak plainly to her?—shall I tell her all?” said the old beau to himself. “I will—I will. Yet no! that were to destroy my plan of vengeance.”

“You hesitate,” cried Lady Kate. “Then you have nothing to tell. You cannot justify your calumnies.”

“Wait till to-morrow, madam. You will then know all, and will understand the cause of my hesitation.”

“Why till to-morrow?—why must I wait till then?—why should you condemn me to a night of misery, when by a few words you can relieve me?”

“Nothing I could say would relieve your anxiety, madam, but would rather heighten it. Press me no further—it will be useless. If we

meet in the morning, I will tell you all. If not—Heaven bless you!—good night.”

Seeing from his manner that nothing further could be obtained from him, Lady Kate withdrew.

Again left alone, the old beau blamed himself that he had not made Lady Kate the partner of his troubles, that by mingling their griefs they might have found mutual solace, and he half resolved to seek her for that purpose. But ere he could reach the door the better impulse had fled, and he recurred to his fell design.

“No weakness,” he muttered—“no weakness. The deed must be done.”

He then repaired to his study, and unlocking an escritoire, took out a bundle of letters, and began to read them, but the emotions excited by their perusal compelled him to desist.

He next took up a miniature of his wife, and gazing at it with irrepressible admiration, exclaimed,

"Ay, those are the features that captivated me. How beautiful she looks!—how guileless!—how passionately I loved her! But love is gone for ever," he added, dashing the picture to the ground, and trampling upon it. "I awake from my infatuated dream to find myself betrayed. Did she ever love me? No—no!—never—never—never!"

His emotions were so poignant that he thought he should have died. On recovering from the paroxysm, he replaced the letters in the *escritoire*, and opened a cupboard, from which he took a small medicine-chest.

For a few moments he stood irresolute, with folded arms, gazing at the box, and the expression of his ghastly features was perfectly fiendish. At last, he took a small key and applied it to the chest, but his hand trembled so, that, after more than one ineffectual attempt, the key fell from his grasp.

"Were I superstitious I should deem this an

interposition of some good spirit to turn me from my fatal purpose," he murmured. "But I will not be deterred. Let me think upon my wrongs, and be firm."

With that he unlocked the chest, and took from it a phial filled with a liquid clear as water.

Again a nervous trembling seized him, and in his agitation he nearly dropped the phial; but he had just managed to secure it, when he was confounded by the unexpected entrance of his wife.

"I have come to see what is the matter with you," she said. "Lady Kate tells me something has disturbed you. Are you not well? You look unusually pale. What is it?"

"Nothing, nothing," he replied, hastily. "Don't trouble yourself about me. I shall soon be better. I was coming to your room to say 'good night' before going to Lady de Burgh's, but since you are here, pray take a seat. I have something to say to you."

"Well, don't keep me long. I'm very tired,

and want to go to bed," she said, yawning terribly.

"Spare me a few minutes. You will have a long and sound sleep presently," he said, in a sombre tone, and regarding her fixedly.

"How strangely you look at me," she cried. "Lady Kate said there was something odd about you, and I find it true. Do smile a little bit. You'll frighten everybody if you look so savage. You remind me of Bluebeard in the fairy piece, when he is about to cut off his wife's head. I hope you don't mean to kill me."

"Kill you!" echoed Wilson. "What put that thought into your silly head?"

"Your ferocious looks," she rejoined. "Some people say you are jealous enough to do some horrid deed. But I have no fears. You are too fond of Belinda to cut off her head—eh, M. Barbe Bleu?"

"Since we have been united, madam, have I

ever treated you otherwise than with kindness?" asked the old beau.

"Your conduct has been praiseworthy on the whole, though you have shown strange fits of temper now and then," she rejoined. "Luckily, I don't mind them."

"Answer me one question, Belinda. Have you ever repented your marriage with me?"

"Repented it! to be sure. A hundred times, at least. Whenever we have a little quarrel, I always long for a separation; but then you invariably make me such nice presents afterwards, that I am content to be reconciled. By-the-by, you have never given me the diamond rivière you promised me after our last squabble."

"Enough of this trifling, madam," said the old beau, sternly. "I have far different matters to discuss with you. Strange stories have been told me concerning you—stories damaging to yourself and to my honour."

"And you believe those calumnies? You suppose me capable of such misconduct?" she cried, rearing her proud form to its height, and regarding him with indignant scorn.

"Yes, madam, I do believe them. It is useless to attempt to carry off the matter with a high hand. I believe in your guilt—ay, *guilt*, madam. Your intrigue with Mr. Law is the talk of the Town. Aha! you thought me your dupe. But if I am blind, other people are not. One of my kind friends was considerate enough—curse him!—to send me a letter this morning acquainting me with your conduct. Besides, I have had confirmation of the statement. I overheard what passed between you and your paramour in the Birdcage-walk this morning, and I learnt that he is to be in the garden to-night."

"All this admits of easy explanation, sir, but I shall not condescend to give it," said Belinda, preparing to quit the room.

But the old beau anticipated her purpose, and

hastily locking the door, put the key in his pocket.

"Do you mean to detain me against my will?" she said, affrighted by his manner.

And she attempted to ring the bell, but he seized her arm, and forced her into a chair. Drawing his sword, he then bade her prepare for instant death.

"I cannot believe you are in earnest," she cried. "This is done to terrify me."

"Make your peace with Heaven, I say, madam," rejoined Wilson. "You have not many minutes to live."

"Mercy! mercy!" she cried, reading her fate in his looks. "By your former love for me, I implore you to spare me."

"All pity has been banished from my breast by your perfidy," cried Wilson. "You shall die."

"Not by your hand," she shrieked. "I am innocent. I swear it. Hear what I have to say."

"I will hear nothing now," said Wilson, in a

frenzied tone. "You seek only to gain time. Utter a cry, and I will plunge my sword into your heart. You are beyond all human aid."

"Then help me, Heaven!" she ejaculated.

"I cannot shed her blood," said Wilson. "Drink this," he added, taking the phial from his vest.

"Is it poison?" she cried.

"Drink it!" he rejoined. "I give you choice of death. Or this, or the sword!"

Unable to resist him, she took the phial, placed it to her lips, and after swallowing a portion of its contents, fell, with a half-stifled shriek, to the ground.

Wilson sank upon a chair, averted his gaze, and tried to shut his ears to the fearful sounds that reached them.

All was soon still. Nevertheless, he did not dare to look round, but remained for some time in the same posture.

At last, the clock struck eleven, and roused by

the sound, he arose, muttering, "I have more to do."

A dreadful shudder passed over his frame as he cast one look at the inanimate form of her he had once loved so well.

But the furies were still busy in his breast, and pity could not gain access to it. Unlocking the door, he went forth, repeating the words, "I have more to do."

XII.

AT THE GARDEN-GATE.

THAT night, about three-quarters of an hour after the tragic event we have just narrated, a sedan-chair was set down in Hay-street, near the wall of a garden evidently belonging to a large mansion situated in the adjacent square; and a gentleman wrapped in a cloak got out, and bade the chairmen await his return.

“All right, yer hon’r,” replied our old acquaintance, Terry O’Flaherty. “Don’t hurry on our account, Mr. Laa. We’ll find plenty ov amuse-

ment talkin' to each other. But for the love of Heaven stop a minute, sir—there's somebody watchin' yonder. Get into the cheer again, and we'll just carry yer hon'r round the corner to baffle him."

"Poh, poh, nonsense!" cried Law. "There is nothing to be alarmed at. Wait here till I return." So saying, he unlocked a door in the garden-wall, and disappeared.

Scarcely was he gone, when the individual who had excited Terry's apprehensions crossed the street, making his way as quickly as his lameness would allow towards the very door in the garden-wall through which Law had passed.

The night was dark, and there were no lamps in the street; nevertheless, as the personage in question drew near, he was recognised by the chairmen, owing to the peculiarity of his gait.

"Saints protect us!" exclaimed Terry, "it's owld Beau Wilson hisself. I know him by his lame leg. There'll be murder in a minute. We

mustn't let him into the garden, Pat. Halloa, sir," he added, "you can't go in there."

Wilson, however, paid no heed to the injunction, but was proceeding to unlock the door, when his arms were seized and pinioned by the two stalwart chairmen.

"Zounds, rascals!" he cried, struggling ineffectually to get free; "would you prevent me from going into my own house? Liberate me instantly, at your peril."

"If this is your own house, sir, you had better go in at the front door," replied Terry. "Get into the cheer, and we'll take you round to it."

"Ay, get in," added Pat Molloy, endeavouring to force him into the sedan-chair.

The old beau, however, violently resisted their efforts, and as they were afraid of proceeding to extremities with him, he at length succeeded in extricating himself from their clutches. But Terry was resolved, at all hazards, to prevent him from

entering the garden, and accordingly planted himself before the door.

"Stand aside, sirrah!" cried Wilson, furiously, "or you will repent it. A man has just furtively entered my garden, and if you hinder me from pursuing him, you will be treated as his accomplices. The law will deal rigorously with you, I can promise you."

"Tut! the law won't meddle wi' honest men like us, so we're not afeerd," rejoined Terry, stoutly. "But your hon'r must be mistaken. The jontleman we set down went into yonder house," pointing to a habitation a short way down the street.

"It is false!" cried Wilson. "I saw him go in here. Stand aside, I command you, or it will be worse for you." And he drew his sword.

"Och, murder! I'll be kilt!" cried Terry. "Seize hould ov him, Pat, or he'll spit me wid his toasting-fork."

Though menaced by the old beau, who swore he would run him through the body if he did not move, Pat resolutely kept his place, and it is difficult to say what might have been the end of the dispute, if a watchman had not at this moment turned the corner of the street, and, on being hailed by Wilson, instantly hurried to the spot. The watchman's first business was to hold up his lantern and scrutinise the countenances of the parties, and as the light fell upon the marked features of the old beau, he instantly cried out that it was Mr. Wilson.

"You're sure of that, Charley?" said Terry.

"As sure as I am that you're an Irishman," replied the other.

"Then whatever you do, don't let him into the garden," said Terry. "Take him round to the front door, and ask the servants to put him to bed as quickly as they can. He has had too much to drink."

To this allegation the old beau gave an indignant

denial, but the watchman, who was not altogether sober himself, was inclined to think there might be some truth in it; and hoping, at all events, to obtain a crown for his pains, he was trying to persuade Wilson to comply with Terry's suggestion, when two other persons appeared on the scene. These were Sir Harry and Charlie Carrington.

Sir Harry immediately offered his services to the old beau, who, taking him aside, said, in a low tone, "You will wonder what I am doing here with these fellows, but the fact is, I have been on the watch for Law, and having seen him pass through that door into my garden, I should have instantly followed had I not been hindered by those chairmen, who are in his pay. Come with me, Sir Harry, I entreat you; and as the villain must at once give me satisfaction for the injury he has done me, I will beg of you to act as my second?"

"I don't see how I can refuse you, sir, if you are determined upon an immediate encounter," re-

plied Sir Harry; "and to tell you the truth, it was the hope of preventing mischief that brought Carrington and myself here."

"Then you knew of the assignation?" cried Wilson.

"Do not ask me, sir," rejoined Sir Harry. "I don't desire to add fuel to the flame already raging within your breast. Let it suffice that, believing you are entitled to demand instant satisfaction from Law, I am ready to serve as your second. The only stipulation I make is, that Charles Carrington shall accompany us. His services may be required on the other side. Bad as it is, the affair must be conducted *en règle*."

"I care not how it is conducted," rejoined the old beau. "I mean to kill the villain."

"Of course, my dear sir, such is your intention. But you must kill him according to rule, or it will be accounted assassination. Allow me a word with Carrington."

"Be brief, then," said the old beau. "Too

much time has been wasted already. The villain may escape me."

"No fear of that, sir. If he quits the garden, he must come out this way."

After a short conference between Sir Harry and Carrington, they informed the old beau that they were ready to attend him.

Seeing it was vain to offer any further opposition, Terry withdrew from his post. The door was then unlocked, and Wilson and his companions went into the garden, taking the watchman with them.

XIII.

IN THE GARDEN.

WE must now return to Law. On entering the garden, which was of some size, and very tastefully laid out, comprehending several fine trees, he made his way towards an alcove, situated on one side of a broad, smooth-shaven lawn, soft to the foot as velvet, and running up to the windows of the house.

No one was within the little building, so he sat down on a chair with which it was provided, and beguiled his impatience as he best could. He had not, however, to wait long. A slight sound

caused by the opening of a glass door communicating with the garden informed him that she he expected was coming forth from the house; and the next moment a female figure, robed in white, could be seen flitting quickly and with noiseless footsteps across the lawn.

"Are you there?" inquired a soft voice, as the lady approached the alcove.

Law made no answer, but rose up and clasped her to his breast.

"I can't stay many minutes with you," she said, disengaging herself from his embrace. "But I have something of importance to say to you. Mr. Wilson has been in a very ill humour to-night, and evidently meditates a quarrel with you."

"Oh! that is of no consequence," rejoined Law, with a laugh. "Probably, some reports of my nocturnal visits have reached him, and aroused his jealousy. But, as you know, I can speedily tranquillise him."

"Of course, by avowing the truth, and letting

him into our secret," responded the lady; "but he provoked me excessively by the malicious things he said of you."

"Why heed them, sweetheart, when you know they arise from jealousy? He will unsay them all when he learns the truth."

"But he called you a rake, and I don't like such a term to be applied to you."

"Yet it is not to be wondered at that he should so style me, if he supposes me enamoured of his wife. I'll answer for it he will retract all he has said when he learns we are secretly married."

"Hush! not so loud—some one may overhear you."

"No matter if I am overheard. I am impatient for the disclosure. Some unpleasant consequences are sure to arise if the avowal is longer delayed. I have reason to suspect that my secret visits to you have been observed, and have given rise to reports prejudicial to Belinda's reputation. The world must know that the visits have been paid to

my wife; and it must also know why we have been privately married."

"In that case I must give up all the property settled upon me by my first husband," said Lady Kate. "It is vexatious to throw away five thousand a year."

"But since the money can't be retained, you must make up your mind to part with it," rejoined Law. "Mr. Senor was a churl to deprive you of your money in case of a second marriage, but I am so pleased with him for leaving you to me, that I won't cast reproaches on his memory. As to the five thousand a year, it is a loss to be sure——"

"A loss! I think so!" interrupted Lady Kate. "It is an immense loss—an irreparable loss."

"Not quite irreparable," rejoined Law. "I will engage to provide you with double that income next year. Why, I have gained twenty thousand pounds within the last month, and if my luck only lasts—as it cannot fail—I shall gain as much

next month. So you see we shall grow rich quickly."

"But how have you gained the money?—Tell me that?"

"By various successful speculations," he replied, with a laugh. "I can't enter into particulars at this moment. But you may rest perfectly easy that you will sustain no material loss from the deprivation of your present income. In a week or two after the public acknowledgment of our marriage, we will go to Brussels, and thence to some of the German courts, where I shall offer my plan to their rulers. Failing there, we will proceed to Turin. Victor Amadeus, King of Sardinia, is almost certain to adopt the scheme."

"Before consenting to the disclosure of our marriage I must consult Belinda, since she advised the secret union," said Lady Kate. "I will go to her at once, and bring you word what she says."

"Oh! she will sanction the immediate avowal,

I am sure, when she becomes aware of the necessity of the step," said Law. "Haste on your errand, and come back quickly. Bring Belinda's consent, and I shall be able to dispel her husband's jealous doubts, and announce proudly to all the world that Lady Catherine Knollys is now Lady Catherine Law."

Thus exhorted, the lady speeded towards the house.

At the very moment of her departure, Beau Wilson and those with him entered the garden, and Charlie Carrington, who was a little in advance of the others, called out,

"There she goes! She has just quitted her lover."

"Whom did you think you saw, sir?" demanded Wilson, too well aware that it could not be the hapless Belinda whom Carrington had beheld.

"Your wife, to be sure! who else could it be?" rejoined the other.

"Impossible!" exclaimed the old beau. "Your eyes must have deceived you."

"At all events, I saw a figure in white," returned the other. "I'll swear to that. But as this is the witching hour of night," he added, as the clock of the church in May Fair struck twelve, "it may have been a ghost."

Beau Wilson shuddered at the idea.

"Stay where you are, sir, if your courage fails you," said Charlie Carrington, noticing that the old beau halted. "Sir Harry and I will see the adventure to an end."

"Come on!" exclaimed Wilson, rousing himself. "We shall find him in the alcove."

"The alcove! eh?" cried Carrington. "What a charming retreat for a pair of turtle-doves! Egad, Law is the luckiest of men."

"You won't say so five minutes hence, sir," rejoined the old beau, gnashing his teeth.

With this he hurried towards the alcove, and the others followed him.

Hearing their approach, Law came forth.

"Soh! we have found you, sir!" cried Wilson, in accents that sounded scarcely human.

"I can easily and satisfactorily explain the cause of my presence here, if you will permit me, Mr. Wilson," said Law.

"No explanation is needed, sir, and none will be accepted by me," rejoined Wilson, fiercely. "I know well enough why you are here, and so do these gentlemen. Draw and defend yourself," he added, flourishing his sword in the other's face.

"Hear what I have to say, my good sir," remonstrated Law. "I swear to you that you are entirely mistaken. I am here for no purpose at which you can possibly take offence."

"Will you give us your word of honour, Mr. Law," interposed Sir Harry, "that a lady—we won't mention any name—has not been with you in this alcove?"

"No, I can't do that," replied Law. "But I

engage to clear away all suspicion, if you will only grant me a few minutes' delay."

"This is mere trifling," roared Wilson. "Put yourself on guard instantly, sir."

"Sir Harry, I appeal to you. This quarrel must not proceed," said Law, still refusing to draw. "I cannot—will not—cross swords with Mr. Wilson."

"Then I will stab you where you stand," cried the old beau, blind with rage.

"Hold, sir!" interposed Sir Harry, arresting him. "Mr. Law, I must tell you that you are bound to give Mr. Wilson satisfaction."

"Satisfaction for what?" cried Law. "I have done him no injury."

"Come, come, sir," cried Sir Harry, "this won't pass with us, after what we have heard——"

"And seen," added Carrington. "Sir Harry and I will take care you have fair play, Mr. Law, but fight you must."

"Ay, that he must, and quickly," cried the old

beau, stamping the ground with rage. "I will suffer no further delay."

"Well, since there is no help for it, I comply," said Law, drawing. "But I announce beforehand that I shall merely act on the defensive."

"And I announce beforehand that I mean to kill you," rejoined Wilson. "So, have at your heart!"

Next moment they were engaged. The watchman held up his lantern, and its glimmer enabled them to discern each other's movements. But for this light they must have fought completely at hazard. The old beau's infuriated condition deprived him of his customary skill. He made several desperate lunges at his opponent, laying himself repeatedly open to a riposte, but Law contented himself with parrying the thrusts.

The conflict was proceeding in this way, when the glass door already alluded to was suddenly thrown open, and Lady Kate, followed by three or four lacqueys bearing lights, rushed forth,

screaming, "Belinda is dead — poisoned by her husband!"

At this appalling cry both combatants stood still.

"What is this I hear?" said Law. "Belinda poisoned, and by you? If you are, indeed, guilty of this inhuman deed, you shall perish by the hangman's hand, not by mine."

"I will not die till I have had my full measure of revenge," cried Wilson.

And he again assailed Law, and with such fury, that the latter, unable to act longer upon the defensive, made a thrust in return, and his sword passed through the madman's body.

At this fatal juncture Lady Kate rushed up, but recoiled with horror on seeing Wilson fall. Law, however, seized her by the hand, and drew her towards the dying man.

"Tell him," he said, "while he can yet hear you, that Belinda was innocent."

"She was!—she was!" cried Lady Kate.
"She never wronged you."

"Why, then, did she meet Law here?" demanded the dying man, faintly.

"She never did meet him," rejoined Lady Kate.
"It was I who came here—I, his wedded wife."

"What!—guiltless! and I have murdered her!" cried the old man, raising himself by a supreme effort. "Mercy!—mercy, Heaven!"

Then sinking backwards, he expired.

End of the Prologue.

BOOK I.



THE REGENT D'ORLÉANS.

I.

TEN YEARS OF TRAVEL.

THE ensuing ten years were spent by Mr. Law in foreign travel.

During the whole of this long period he wandered about the Continent, visiting the principal cities of Belgium, Holland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and France, and even meditating a journey to Russia, whither he was invited by the Czar, Ivan Alexiowitz.

His gains by play and speculation more than sufficed to maintain the extravagant mode of life he had adopted. Travelling en grand signeur with

a host of attendants, he took up his abode in the most magnificent mansion he could hire in every city he stayed at, mingled with the highest society of the place, and gave brilliant entertainments. But though scattering gold abroad profusely with one hand, he was always receiving it with the other.

At each court where he was presented, he met with a distinguished reception, but could not induce any prince or potentate to adopt his financial scheme. While sojourning at Paris, however, he was sent for by the Duc d'Orléans, who, charmed by his graceful manners and eloquence, lent a ready ear to the explanation of his project.

The conjuncture seemed favourable for the experiment. The wasteful wars in which Louis XIV. had been engaged had emptied the treasury. Law undertook to replenish the royal coffers, to raise the public credit, which was all but annihilated, and at no remote period to pay off the national debt.

Dazzled by these splendid promises, the Duc d'Orléans lost no time in communicating the plan to Desmarets, the comptroller-general of finance, who, driven almost to his wits' end to obtain money, was not indisposed to entertain the project, though he had no great faith in its feasibility. But when the minister proposed the plan to Louis XIV., the old and bigoted monarch peremptorily declined it, saying, that whatever benefits might accrue from the measure, he would have nothing to do with it, since it originated with a heretic.

The king's answer was reported to Law by the Duc d'Orléans, who, however, consoled him for his disappointment, saying, with much significance,

“Have a little patience, M. Law. I have not the same religious prejudices as my august uncle. In fact, I have no prejudices. If a plan has merit, I care not for the creed of its contriver. I like your scheme, and will adopt it if an opportunity arises. Again I bid you, wait.”

Play was not then discountenanced as at pre-

sent. The manners of the time encouraged the practice, and it was scarcely a reproach to say of a man that he was a gamester. At Paris there was more play than in any other capital in Europe. Princes and nobles indulged in the dangerous pastime. Even the Grand Monarque himself, the arbiter of all that was decorous, liked to see his courtiers hazard large stakes. During his residence in Paris, Law set up a faro-table, then a novelty in that city, at the house of Madame Duclos, a celebrated comic actress of the day, and occasionally officiated as *tailleur*. Owing to the attraction thus held out, the salons of La Duclos were nightly thronged by persons of the first rank, as well as by the most distinguished members of the various academies, wits, poets, philosophers, and men of science. Amid this brilliant assemblage which he had contrived to bring together, Law was conspicuous for his extreme courtesy of manner, high breeding, and evenness of temper. Whatever dispute arose—for disputes are unavoid-

able at play—he never lost his self-command, was never ruffled.

But Law did not restrict himself to his own faro-table. He frequented other houses where gaming was carried on, and might often be seen at Poisson's in the Rue Dauphine, and at the Hôtel de Gesvres in the Rue des Poulies. At the two latter places the play being very high, our adventurer always came provided with a couple of large bags, containing a hundred thousand livres in gold. Moreover, to facilitate his operations at the tapis vert, he had great counters cast, each of the value of eighteen louis d'or.

Though nothing unfair in his mode of play could be detected—as indeed was impossible, since he always played fairly—yet, as he was invariably a winner, those who were heavy losers to him felt aggrieved, and representations being made by some of them to D'Argenson, lieutenant-general of police—a man of great severity and decision—that functionary ordered him to quit Paris within

twenty-four hours, on the pretext that he was too well skilled in the games he had introduced into that capital.

Thus admonished, Law had no alternative but obedience. Before his departure, however, he obtained an interview with the Duc d'Orléans, who expressed his profound regret that he could not interfere in his behalf, as D'Argenson's order had been ratified by the king; but the prince assured Mr. Law that he did not believe a word that had been uttered to his disadvantage, and added, that Law might always calculate upon his favour and countenance.

"Once more I counsel you to wait!" concluded the prince. "A good time for both of us is at hand. Au revoir!"

Embarking at Havre, Law sailed from that port to Genoa, and, on arriving there, took a palace in the Strada Nuova. The wealthy Genoese soon discovered that an adept at play was among them, but they did not lose their money with more

equanimity than the Parisians. Constant success at cards was unintelligible to them, and they refused to play with one whom they declared must be a conjuror or a cheat.

Warned by the authorities, though not before his pockets were well lined, Law was obliged to leave the city of Andrea Doria, and move on to Rome, where he spent the winter much to his satisfaction; and, on the opening of the Ridotto, which occurred at the commencement of the carnival, he added considerably to his funds, though continuing lavish in his expenditure as ever.

The Easter solemnities over, he proceeded to Florence. Here he became intimate with the Prince de Conti and the Prince de Vendôme, Grand Prior of France—the latter of whom, needy as well as dissolute, and in disgrace at his own court, cemented his friendship with Law by borrowing 10,000 scudi, which the lucky gamester had won overnight from the Marchese Strozzi. And we may add, that the debt was never repaid.

Venice was the next stage on which Law displayed his skill. The réunions which he gave at his palace on the Grand Canal yielded him as large profits as Genoa and Rome had done. At this time his acquisitions from play and fortunate speculations in various ways exceeded 100,000*l*.

And here, lest there should be any misapprehension on the subject, let us state emphatically that the suspicions of unfair play which constantly attached to Mr. Law, were wholly unfounded. He owed his success, as we have already shown, entirely to his skill, his powers of calculation, and perfect coolness. The Duc de Saint-Simon, who knew him intimately at a later date, and was not inclined to judge him too leniently, expressly exonerates him from the charge.

"The Sieur Law was a man of system, calculation, and comparison," says Saint-Simon, in his shrewd and accurate estimate of our adventurer's character, "and so skilful at play, that, without the slightest trickery, he could do that which ap-

pears incredible—win enormously, merely by force of combination at cards.”

The almost octogenarian Louis XIV., who, it has been truly said, lived too long by fifteen years, still continuing to linger on, Law grew tired of waiting for his fall, and accordingly repaired to Turin, where he was very graciously received by Victor Amadeus, King of Sardinia, to whom he proposed his system.

“It is a wonderful scheme,” said the sagacious monarch, “but it will not suit me. You must try France. Only a bold financier like you can save that kingdom from utter ruin. When Louis XIV. drops, your opportunity will come. Meantime, amuse yourself here in Turin as well as you can.”

Though the King of Sardinia declined Law’s proposition, he nevertheless showed him much favour, and consulted him upon many occasions. During his stay at Turin, our adventurer set up a faro-table, as he had done at Paris, and by this

means managed to add some 10,000*l.* more to his capital.

He was now wealthy enough to lead a life of luxury and ease, could he have been content; but, looking upon what he had hitherto done as nothing, he was more eager than ever to carry out his scheme.

At length, the long wished-for time arrived. The Grand Monarque yielded to the stroke of fate, and the Duc d'Orléans, who was fully prepared for the contingency, notwithstanding the feeble opposition of the Duc du Maine, guardian of the infant successor to the throne and in defiance of the late king's will, caused himself, on September 2, 1715, to be declared Regent of France, with absolute power, during the minority of Louis XV., then only five years old.

Shortly after this event, Law transmitted to Paris the whole of his acquisitions, which then amounted, as shown by his own memorial to the Duc de Bourbon in 1724, to 1,600,000 livres, at

28 livres to the marc, or upwards of 110,000*l.* sterling. This done, he took leave of the King of Sardinia, who repeated his augury of success, and set out for the French capital.

On the way thither he was met by a courier charged with despatches from the Regent, inviting him to return to Paris, and assuring him of his royal highness's favour and protection.

Not many days after this, Law reached Paris, full of expectations, which were this time destined to be realised.

Having thus traced our adventurer's public career from his departure from London in 1705, to his arrival in Paris in 1715, we will glance at his domestic life during that period. It may be supposed that his fondness for play, and the dissipation in which he indulged, were little favourable to conjugal felicity, and such is undoubtedly the fact. Luckily for himself, however, he possessed a wife who really loved him, and who, though not blind to his faults, was willing to make large allow-

ances for the temptations of various kinds to which he was necessarily exposed, to overlook his indiscretions, and give him full credit for his good qualities.

Moreover, there were now the strongest ties to bind them together. Two children, a girl and a boy, were the fruits of their union, the former of whom, now nearly nine years old, promised to be of rare beauty, blending in her features the best points of both her parents. Mary Catherine was a most fascinating child, sylph-like in figure, with tender blue eyes and light tresses, like her mother, and features modelled on those of her father. Her brother John, who was a year younger, likewise bore a marked resemblance to his sire, whose quickness, intelligence, good looks, and personal symmetry he inherited.

To these children Lady Catherine was devoted. During all her wanderings they had never been absent from her side, and their society had beguiled many an hour of solitude and tedium.

Doubtless she would have preferred a different existence from that which circumstances compelled her to lead, but she ever accommodated herself to her husband's inclinations, and played her part admirably in the society among which she was thrown. Her distinguished appearance and manners, as well as rank, were of infinite service to Mr. Law during his stay at the various foreign courts.

Upon Lady Catherine's beauty the lapse of time had had no other effect than to improve it. After nine or ten years of married life she looked handsomer, because somewhat fuller in person, than when Law first beheld her. One more particular respecting her must not be omitted. Though ever willing to accompany her husband to court parties, balls, or other entertainments, she was never seen in the salons where he played, neither, we may add, though he did not interdict it, was her presence desired by Mr. Law at such times.

Law was not perceptibly aged. His lofty figure had lost none of its symmetry and grace, his fea-

tures were handsome as ever, retaining the same freshness of tint and feminine delicacy by which they had been formerly distinguished ; and his manners, always polished, had acquired an inexpressible charm from constant intercourse with the chief members of foreign courts. Moreover, his remarkable power of fascination had in no degree deserted him. He was still handsome, insinuating, captivating, resistless as ever.

It may be thought that the life of constant excitement which he had led, that late hours, some excesses, and habitual play, must have told upon a frame however vigorous; and if not detrimental to his constitution, must, at least, have impaired his good looks. But it was not so. At forty-four he was still in the full vigour of life—still, so to speak, a young man. Attaching as much importance as ever to external embellishment, he was still conspicuous for the elegance and richness of his attire.

How his breast swelled with pride and delight as he entered the vast hotel in the Place Vendôme, which had been hired for him by the confidential agent to whom he had transmitted his funds from Italy, and conducted Lady Catherine and their fair daughter and blooming son over the spacious and superbly-furnished salons! How elated he felt by the thought of the wonders he was about to achieve! Brilliant visions rose before him at that moment—many of which were realised—but he could not foresee the end!

Lady Catherine herself was equally delighted, and almost equally sanguine of the future. Tired of travel, she was enchanted to get back to Paris, the city of her predilection. Having shared in her husband's disappointment at the constant rejection of his financial scheme, she was naturally overjoyed at the brilliant prospects now opening upon him—for with the Regent in his favour, what further obstacle could he encounter?—and she was

also delighted that he was about to enter upon a career worthy of him.

Husband and wife often recalled in after days the feelings they experienced on the night of their return to Paris.

II.

THE REGENT AND THE ABBÉ DUBOIS.

BEFORE proceeding further, it may be necessary to offer a brief description of the Prince, who had lately seized the reins of government, and made himself absolute ruler of France.

There were many points of resemblance between Philippe Duc d'Orléans, nephew of Louis XIV., and our own Charles II.; but there were darker shades in the character of the Regent than in that of the English monarch. Like Charles, the Regent was gay, good humoured, witty, quick at repartee, corrupt, irreligious, and without faith

in the honesty of man or woman. Like Charles, too, he was lavish of promises which he never meant to fulfil, but which were made with such semblance of sincerity that none could doubt them. Like the English monarch, also, he was magnanimous enough to forgive his enemies. When urged to punish those who had calumniated him during the late reign, he replied, nobly, "The Regent does not avenge the injuries of the Duc d'Orléans."

Philippe persuaded himself that he could read at a glance the character of any one presented to him, and he was frequently right. Endowed with a memory of singular tenacity, he never forgot what he read or heard. When quite young, he made a brilliant début in the career of arms under the Duc de Luxembourg at Steinkirk and Neuwinde, and there can be no doubt that if he had not been checked by the jealousy of his royal uncle, he would have won high military renown. Condemned, however, to inglorious ease, he contented himself with the life of a Sybarite. But,

though sensual, he was not idle, and had a multitude of pursuits, and might, if he pleased, have been universally accomplished. His mother, Charlotte Elizabeth, Princess Palatine of Bavaria, a woman of great cleverness, said that on Philippe's birth the fairies were invited, and each gave him a talent. Unluckily, one malicious fairy, having been forgotten, came unasked, and said, "He shall have all the talents except that of making use of them."

Philippe was a painter, engraver, mechanician, and musician, furnished charming designs for the Daphnia and Chloe of Amyot, and composed an opera, which was played before the king and the court with much applause. He also devoted himself with great ardour to chemistry, and by his proficiency in that science drew upon himself the foulest suspicions. The sudden demise of the Dauphin, only son of Louis XIV., followed in the ensuing year by the equally sudden death of the Duc de Bourgogne, the king's grandson, who had

become Dauphin, and who was shortly afterwards followed to the tomb by *his* eldest son, the Duc de Bretagne—these startling events aroused suspicion, which naturally fell upon the Duc d'Orléans, as the person most interested in the removal of those between him and the throne. Only a frail infant, the Duc d'Anjou, the king's great-grandson, was now left, and he was saved, it was thought, by an antidote administered by his *gouvernante*, the Duchesse de Ventadour.

In vain Philippe protested his innocence—in vain, he strove to defend himself from the cry of accusation raised against him by the public—in vain, he demanded an investigation; his denial was disbelieved, and the charge, though unsubstantiated, left an ineffaceable stain upon his character. Maréchal, first surgeon to Louis XIV., while attempting to clear the prince from these terrible aspersions, lauded his great scientific attainments, observing to the king,

“Sire, if M. le Duc d'Orléans were a private

person without fortune, he would have more than ten ways of earning a livelihood. Besides, he is the best man in the world."

"The best man!" exclaimed Louis. "Do you know what my nephew is? I will tell you in a word: C'est un fanfaron des crimes."

And if the king believed in his nephew's guilt, he did not judge him too harshly.

It has been asserted that retribution eventually overtook Philippe, and that he met his death while attempting to poison the young king by a cup of chocolate. Suspecting his design, an attendant, it is said, contrived to change the cups, and the Regent partook of the draught he had prepared for his royal charge. Such is the tale; but there is little reason to doubt that Philippe's sudden death, which took place at Versailles, was occasioned by a stroke of apoplexy.

But to resume. Regarded with suspicion and aversion by the king, who would fain have excluded him from the regency, exposed to the

secret hostility of Madame de Maintenon and the Jesuits, shunned by the courtiers, and detested by the populace, who had more than once threatened his life, the Duc d'Orléans seemed to have little chance of obtaining the object of his ambition. Louis XIV. had legitimatised his two sons by Madame de Montespan, the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse, and now, by a codicil to his will, he constituted the Duc du Maine guardian of his infant successor, with the command of the household troops, and, in order to deprive his nephew of absolute power, appointed a Court of Regency.

But the Duc d'Orléans, though apparently indifferent, and immersed in sensuality, was secretly strengthening himself, and preparing for the struggle. He had won over the Duc de Noailles, the Duc de Guiche, colonel of the French Guards, Reynolds, colonel of the Swiss Guards, the Maréchal de Villars, the Maréchal de Villeroi, and the

Chancellor Voisin — the latter of whom disclosed to him the secret of the king's will.

On the day after the death of Louis XIV., when parliament met to decide upon the regency, the grand coup d'état was struck, measures having been taken to ensure its success.

The chief president of parliament, De Mesme, had been bought by the Duc du Maine, but the Duc de Guiche environed the palace with his men, the Swiss Guards under Reynolds lined the courts and vestibules, while the Abbé Dubois introduced Lord Stair, the English ambassador, into the lantern, to insinuate that the Court of Saint James's was favourable to the pretensions of the Duc d'Orléans.

Surrounded by his partisans, the Duc d'Orléans boldly declared that the Council of Regency, appointed by the late king's will, was contrary to the last words which he had heard pronounced by the dying monarch, and, imposing silence upon

the Duc du Maine, who would have interrupted him, he declared himself Regent of France, with absolute power. Moved by his eloquence, and cajoled by his promises, the parliament concurred.

Thus the will of Louis XIV. was set aside, and the new Regent returned in triumph to the Palais Royal, amid the acclamations of the populace, who shortly before had hooted him as an assassin and a poisoner.

When Philippe subsequently went to Versailles to announce his triumph to his mother, she said to him,

“My son, I have one request to make of you. Give me your word that you will cease to employ the Abbé Dubois. He is the greatest knave on earth, and would sacrifice the state and you, without the slightest scruple, to his own interest.”

Philippe readily gave the required pledge, but he did not keep it, as will be seen.

Perhaps the most discreditable feature in the conduct of the duke's supporters, was the convic-

tion they secretly entertained that his assumption of the Regency was but a step towards supreme power, and that since he had found means to remove so many obstacles in his path to the throne he would have little difficulty in getting rid of the last frail bar. Some of them, no doubt, calculated beforehand upon the wages that connivance with this dark deed would produce.

The principal offices in the government were of course distributed by Philippe among his partisans. An important change had taken place in the form of the new administration. There were no secretaries of state as in the preceding reign. The mechanism of the new government consisted of six councils, the heads of each of which were members of the council-general of the regency, and brought up resolutions and reports. The Regent presided over the council-general, but being to a certain extent controlled by it, he could not exclaim with the same truth as his uncle, "L'état c'est moi!"

Philippe's personal favourites and the companions of his shameless orgies, whom he denominated his Roués, because he declared they would all consent to be broken on the wheel for him, while in the opinion of every decent person they richly deserved that punishment for their vices, were chosen entirely for their amusing qualities and utter indifference to decorum. Some of the more important of these were scattered among the various councils, others occupied posts in the household, but none of them had any real influence over the Regent. The chiefs of the Roués were the Ducs de Broglie, de Brancas, and Biron, with Canillac, cousin of the commandant of musketeers—four very handsome young men, but dreadful reprobates.

The most beautiful women of the Regent's court were unquestionably his three daughters, the Duchesse de Berri, the Duchesse de Chartres, and the Duchesse de Valois, the first of whom resided in queenly state at the Palais du Luxembourg,

and exercised unbounded influence over her father.

But besides these three lovely princesses, whose levity of manners gave rise to infinite scandal, there were a host of titled dames of rare personal attractions, some of whom were supposed to share in Philippe's nocturnal orgies, while scarcely one of them escaped calumny.

In short, at the corrupt court of the Regent d'Orléans, where morality and decency were derided, and where vice reared her front unabashed, it would have been as difficult to find a woman of stainless reputation as to discover an honest man. Since a comparison has been instituted between the Duc d'Orléans and Charles II., it would be unfair to our own monarch not to state that depths of depravity were sounded by Philippe from which Charles would have recoiled, and that the French court was incomparably more profligate than the English.

On assuming the regency, Philippe was only

just turned forty, but he looked older, for his handsome features wore strong traces of the dissolute life he led. Moreover, owing to an injury he had sustained, he had almost lost the sight of one eye. Still, his countenance had an agreeable expression, and his manner was so affable as to set all who approached him at their ease. In his hours of conviviality, indeed, and in the society of his Roués, he threw off all etiquette and restraint, and appeared only as a boon companion. Even then, however, his natural grace and good breeding never entirely forsook him; neither when his heart was opened by wine could any state secret be wrested from him.

Our sketch would be incomplete without some allusion to the remarkable personage by whom the Regent was secretly governed, and by whose pernicious counsels his mind had been early corrupted.

The Abbé Dubois was the son of an apothecary at Brive, in Limousin, and being sent to Paris

at an early age, he was lucky enough to get appointed preceptor to the Duc d'Orléans, then Duc de Chartres, and soon contrived to insinuate himself into the good opinion of the young prince. At this time he played a double part, and played it successfully. While instructing his royal pupil with so much care as to enable him to pass his examinations with credit, he sought to ensure his own influence over him by ministering to his pleasures, and by these infamous means obtained an ascendancy over him, which he could never shake off.

The credit enjoyed by Dubois with the young duke did not escape the notice of Louis XIV., and that monarch confidentially employed the abbé to negotiate a marriage between Philippe and Mademoiselle de Blois, the king's daughter by Madame de Montespan. By the address of Dubois this match, on which Louis had set his heart, was accomplished in spite of the opposition of the prince's mother, and the abbé had the assurance

to ask for a cardinal's hat as the reward of the service. Louis scouted the audacious request, but included his ally in Tallard's embassy to London, at which time the abbé, who then styled himself the Chevalier Dubois, made the acquaintance of Lord Stanhope, and many other eminent political personages.

The remarkable talent for intrigue possessed by Dubois began now to be developed. He had long nourished ambitious designs, and hoped by the aid of Philippe, now become Duc d'Orléans, to carry them into effect. Ostensibly acting as secretary, he was in reality director of the prince's household, his counsellor, and indeed governor, and though often in disgrace, owing to his insolence, he was never dismissed.

It was mainly owing to the abbé's adroit management that Philippe secured the regency. But when the arch intriguer claimed the reward of his services, Philippe, fully aware of the odium he would incur by appointing a person of such scan-

dalous character to any post of importance, hesitated, and tried to put him off. Dubois, however, insisted, observing:

“Your highness is now all-powerful. Will you leave in inaction the man who has raised you?”

Yielding to his solicitations, the Regent named him councillor of state, giving great offence by the step to all those with whom the abbé was associated.

Though stained by vice, and without a single redeeming quality, Dubois was a person of great capacity, learned, well informed, and cunning in the highest degree. “He lied with so much effrontery,” says Saint-Simon, “that even when caught in the fact he would deny it. His conversation,” adds the same authority, “otherwise instructive, ornate, and agreeable, was tainted by a *fumée de fausseté*, that seemed to distil from his pores.” He feigned to have an impediment in his speech in order to watch the person who addressed him, and gain time for reply. So wary

was he, that he must have been a subtle antagonist who would take him at a disadvantage. Notwithstanding his nocturnal excesses Dubois was exceedingly industrious, rose early, and devoted the greater part of the day to business. His disposition, unlike that of the Regent, was vindictive; he cherished the recollection of past affronts and injuries, and when he at length attained the height of his ambition, and became cardinal and prime minister, he exiled all those who had offended him.

At the time of our history, the Abbé Dubois was on the verge of sixty. He was small of stature, with a slight frame shattered by debauchery. His features were exceedingly sharp, and stamped with cunning, and his keen eyes, long nose, and yellow hair gave him a marked resemblance to a fox.

III.

THE REGENT'S CABINET.

ON the morning after his arrival, Mr. Law repaired to the Palais Royal. In the vestibule were splendidly-accoutred officers of the French and Swiss Guards; in the gallery leading to the state apartments he encountered a host of silken pages and servitors bedecked with lace and embroidery; and in the ante-chamber, into which he was ushered, he found a throng of courtiers of all ranks and all ages, clad in habiliments of the richest stuffs, and of the gayest hues, for the mourning for the late king was already over.

At no period was costume richer or more becoming than during the Regency, when the known partiality of the Duc d'Orléans for splendid attire caused his courtiers to vie with each other in personal adornment. The voluminous perukes worn in the previous reign had not been discontinued even by the youngest galliard—probably, because the Regent himself liked the mode—but many slight changes had taken place in the fashion of the habiliments, so that an old courtier of the time of Louis XIV., who still adhered to his wonted attire, looked positively antiquated.

Very different was the behaviour of the assemblage from what it had been under similar circumstances during the late reign. Then all was gravity and decorum. No one spoke above a whisper, and a jest was seldom hazarded. But now there was no restraint whatever. Every one talked freely and laughed loudly at the numerous scandalous stories recounted by the Roués, many of which referred to the Regent himself, and these

excited the greatest merriment. Affairs of galantry were much more discussed by that profligate throng than affairs of state, and, in fact, formed the staple of conversation. Each did as he listed, and some of the Roués, easily to be detected from the extreme elegance of their apparel, as well as from their dissipated looks, beguiled the time with cards and dice. De Broglie, De Brancas, Biron, and Canillac, were seated at a table, placed in the recess of a window, engaged at basset, as Law entered the ante-chamber.

After a brief detention, Law was conducted by an usher to the Regent's private cabinet—considerable surprise being manifested by all those who heard the summons.

The only person with the prince at the time was the Abbé Dubois. Philippe was reclining on a couch, and his countenance was flushed from the effects of the orgie he had indulged in overnight. But he brightened up on seeing Law, and gave him a most gracious reception.

"Ah, *Sieur Law*, welcome back to Paris!" he cried. "I was enchanted to hear of your arrival last night, and should have sent for you to a *petit souper*, if I hadn't fancied you might be fatigued with your long journey from Italy."

"Fatigued or not, I am ever at your royal highness's disposal," replied *Law*, with a bow.

"*De Broglie* and *De Brancas* were with me," said *Philippe*, "and you would have met two pretty actresses, *Désirée* and *Zaire*, besides the *Marquise de Mouchy* and *Madame Tencin*. The supper was exquisite, and served on a *table volante*—an invention of my own, which I flatter myself you will like—so we were secure from all interruption, and were it not for the infernal headache that troubles me," he added, pressing his fevered brow, "I should have a most delightful recollection of the evening. How much burgundy did I drink, *drôle?*" he added to *Dubois*. "You are sobriety itself, and can tell."

"I beg your highness not to appeal to me,"

replied the abbé. "I never recollect anything that occurs at one of your suppers, and care not even to be reminded that I have been a guest."

"Say you so, coquin? I will punish you by not inviting you to-night to the Luxembourg, where I mean to take the *Sieur Law*."

"I shall be thankful to be relieved," replied Dubois. "But perhaps your royal highness will deign to talk a little seriously. I know you have matters of importance to discuss with the *Sieur Law*."

"How can I talk seriously?" exclaimed Philippe. "My head is as frightfully confused as his late majesty's accounts, and as empty of ideas as his coffers are of coin. The only legacy the king has left us, *M. Law*, is a debt, which it will take us twenty years to defray, if we live upon nothing till it is discharged. *Prithee, scélérat*," he added to Dubois, "explain the state of our finances to the *Sieur Law*. The very thought gives me the nausea."

"And well it may," rejoined Dubois. "The Sieur Law will scarcely need be told that our finances are in a most deplorable state. The late king's balance-sheet shows a debt of three milliards four hundred and sixty millions, bearing an interest of eighty-six millions. We cannot even pay the interest of this enormous debt, since the excess of revenue above the ordinary expenditure is only nine millions. The people are taxed to the uttermost; public credit is gone, and trade well-nigh destroyed."

"A pleasant state of things, eh, M. Law?" observed the Regent, laughing. "All this we owe to my uncle's taste for war. On his death-bed he enjoined his great-grandson to maintain peace, and practise economy; and so we must, for we cannot pay our soldiers, and our revenues, as you see, are eaten up by creditors. Apparently, the debt must be expunged by a national bankruptcy."

"That must not be thought of for a moment," cried Law, quickly. "I will find a remedy. Now

is the time to test the efficacy of my system. I pray your highness not to hesitate in its adoption."

"We can scarcely be worse off whatever plan we essay," returned the Regent, with a laugh. "Yours may serve as well as another."

"My plan will save the kingdom from ruin," said Law, confidently; "and my head shall answer for my failure."

"What say you to this, drôle?" said Philippe, appealing to his confidant. "Shall I do it?"

The abbé was seized with a fit of stammering, and could not immediately reply. Whereupon Law interposed.

"I pray your highness to hear me out," he said. "I ask for no pecuniary assistance. I only ask for your countenance. I have brought with me from Italy upwards of two millions of livres, which shall be devoted to the establishment of a Royal Bank. This will form the basis of my grand scheme, which, when in full operation, will astonish

Europe by the changes it will effect in favour of France — changes greater than have been produced by the discovery of the Indies, or by the introduction of credit. By my instrumentality your highness shall be in a condition to raise your kingdom from the sad state to which it is reduced, and to render it more powerful than it has ever been; to establish order in the finances; remit imposts; encourage and increase agriculture, manufactures, and commerce; augment the general revenues of the kingdom; redeem useless and onerous charges; and pay off the debts of state without wronging the creditors.”

“Bravo! bravissimo!” cried Philippe, clapping his hands joyfully. “What say you to this magnificent proposal, eh, drôle?” he added to Dubois.

“I am sorry it cannot be done,” replied the abbé, coldly.

“Mort de ma vie!—but it *shall* be done!” exclaimed the Regent, springing to his feet. “Who shall say ‘nay,’ if I enjoin it?”

"The chief of the council of finance—the Duc de Noailles," rejoined Dubois. "He can hinder you."

Law looked hard at the Regent, expecting him to gainsay this assertion, but, to his surprise, Philippe only gave utterance to an exclamation of anger, and flung himself upon the couch.

"You must get rid of Noailles before you can carry out the *Sieur Law's* plan," continued Dubois, fixing his keen eye upon the Regent. "With Villeroi you can do anything—with Noailles nothing. The pupil of Desmarets has his own expedients for re-establishing the finances, and will not allow an intruder into his administration."

"Any arbitrary measures which the Duc de Noailles may adopt will never enable your highness to discharge the national debt," said Law, "while they will inevitably increase the misery under which the kingdom now labours."

"True," replied Dubois; "but he must have a trial."

"I repeat, he will fail," said Law.

"So much the better for you," rejoined the abbé. "When he has been tried and found wanting, you will come in with additional effect."

At this moment an usher announced the Duc de Noailles and the Maréchal de Villeroi.

"Ah! here he is," cried Dubois. "Your highness can ascertain whether he will relish the scheme."

IV.

THE DUC DE NOAILLES AND THE MARÉCHAL DE VILLEROI.

THE Duc de Noailles, who now entered, was a tall, portly personage, of martial air and deportment. He was clad in rich military array, and wore a peruke à la brigadière—a wig ample in front, and turned up behind. The duke had figured in the late wars with Spain, and had obtained some unimportant victories, but he was but a mediocre general, lacking the coup d'œil of genius, and the power of bold and rapid execution that mark the great commander. Yet in liberating Languedoc from the descent made upon it by the

English in the winter of 1709, he displayed energy and promptitude.

Speaking of him at the head of the army, Saint-Simon says, "that he harassed his troops by useless movements, by marches and counter-marches which none could understand, sometimes ordering the whole army to march and then suddenly to halt, driving the men to despair." In state affairs, he pursued the same course, would seize a project, follow it ardently for some days, and then lay it aside for another, which in its turn was abandoned. "He has always some new hobby," adds Saint-Simon, "some fresh fancy, and has no consecutive ideas except for plots, cabals, and snares, and is ever digging mines under our feet."

But though unstable, the Duc de Noailles was fond of business, and possessed extraordinary powers of application. Easy and agreeable in manner, though not profound, he talked well on most subjects. He was greedy and ambitious, and had made the post of prime minister the price of

his defection from the Duc du Maine, but he accepted the presidency of the finances provisionally. The Regent disliked and distrusted him, but was obliged to yield to his demands. Dubois, however, resolved to thwart the aim of the insatiate duke, and meditated his overthrow.

The old Maréchal de Villeroi, who came next, retained the costume of the former court, and was stiff and stately in carriage, and proud and pompous in manner. His incapacity as a general had been proved at Ramillies, where he was signally defeated by Marlborough; but ill success in the field did not deprive him of his royal master's favour.

Faithless to the sovereign who had loaded him with benefits, and who, when expiring, honoured him with marks of his confidence and esteem, Villeroi, finding his advances to the Duc du Maine coldly received, had the ingratitude and baseness to betray his trust for a place in the Council of Regency, coupled with the governorship of the infant king; and it was through his

instrumentality that the Chancellor Voisin was induced, on certain conditions, to deliver up the codicil to the king's will, of which he was the depositary. The Maréchal de Villeroi was now chief of the council of finance, but he merely enjoyed the title without the power. The humiliating position in which he was placed by the superior abilities of Noailles, who took the lead in all discussions, and treated his opinions with ill-disguised contempt, made him detest his ambitious colleague, but, not possessing the talent to compete with him, he concealed his aversion under the mask of arrogance and indifference.

But though the Regent had fulfilled his part of the compact, and placed the imbecile old marshal in a position he was wholly unfit to occupy, the latter felt no gratitude, but, perfidious as ever, soon began secretly to plot with the Duc du Maine against his new master. Villeroi, however, was not the only one of the professed adherents of the Duc d'Orléans who was false to him. Many

others were equally treacherous, and the Regent, whose penetration enabled him to fathom their designs, may be excused for the poor estimate he formed of mankind from the specimens brought under his immediate notice.

Though hating them both, the Regent received the two ministers with a warmth and appearance of regard that did infinite credit to his powers of dissimulation.

To the more perfidious of the pair, the old Maréchal de Villeroi, he was particularly attentive, and inquired with almost filial solicitude after his gout and bodily ailments. The veteran courtier, who, fatuous as he was, was not duped by these professions of regard, feigned to be deeply gratified by the Regent's consideration, and, while thanking him for his goodness, said that he had just come from Vincennes, where he had left his royal charge in the care of his gouvernante, the Duchesse de Ventadour.

"His majesty, I am sorry to say, is troubled

with a slight cold," he observed; "but your highness need not feel the least uneasiness about him. We shall soon get rid of it. The duchess watches over him like a mother, and soothes him with the most delicate syrups and confections!"

"I know her affection for him," said the Regent. "But the most trifling ailment ought not to be disregarded. Too much care cannot be taken of the most precious life in the kingdom."

"Every care shall be taken of him—on that your highness may rely," said Villeroi, majestically.

"I have no doubt of it," remarked the Regent; "but I shall drive to Vincennes this morning to see his majesty."

"Perhaps it may be well to defer the visit for a day or two," said Villeroi, rather confused. "His majesty is a little peevish and fretful, and scolded even me when I approached to kiss his hand—ordering me out of his presence with an observation which I care not to repeat. Possibly he might refuse to see your highness."

"Especially if prompted to do so by his *gouvernante*," replied the Regent, laughing. "However, since you assure me there is nothing seriously the matter with him, I won't alarm the duchess by an unexpected visit. Ere long, I may have to hold another *Lit de Justice*, at which his majesty's presence will be necessary, and for that you will be prepared."

Then turning to Noailles, he said, "You have come at a moment when I am most anxious to consult you, M. le Duc. You have heard me speak in high terms of the financial talent of the *Sieur Law*. He is here—just returned from Italy."

"I am charmed to make the *Sieur Law*'s acquaintance," said Noailles, bowing to him. "I have heard much of him."

"So have I," observed *Villeroi*, likewise honouring *Law* with a formal bow—"from the *Prince de Conti*—and I forget who else."

"Possibly the *Duc du Maine*, or the *Comte de Toulouse*," supplied the Regent. "Never mind

whom. The *Sieur Law* has a great and deserved reputation."

"He has the reputation of great skill at play—that I perfectly remember," said Villeroi. "I have not forgotten the charming soirées we used to have at the salons of La Duclos, where we all lost our money at *faro*, nor the enormous golden counters, each worth eighteen *louis d'or*, which the *Sieur Law* placed on the table at Boisson's—ha! ha!"

"Your memory, I perceive, does not fail you, marshal; but *M. Law* has now more important matters on hand than play," said the Regent. "Aware of our financial difficulties, and desirous of alleviating them, he proposes the establishment of a Bank, on the principle of those already in operation in neighbouring kingdoms, to be administered in the king's name, and under royal authority. Such a bank he believes calculated to revive the credit of the country, and I confess I have full confidence in the project."

"I shall be glad to be made more fully acquainted with the *Sieur Law's* plan," said *Noailles*, looking keenly at him.

"The idea of the Royal Bank I design, *M. le Duc*," observed *Law*, "is to make it a receptacle for the state revenues, and in fact for all the metallic currency of the kingdom, which I propose to replace by bank-notes. I look upon the whole nation as a grand banking company, and I argue that if a bank may increase the issue of its notes beyond the amount possessed by it in bullion, without risking its solvency, a nation may act in the same manner with perfect security. Let me add, that the utility of paper-money is such that I am certain all the world will prefer it to specie."

"Paper-money has unquestionably two grand recommendations," observed the Regent—"convenience in payment and security in carriage."

"True, but it may be burnt, or lost, or abstracted, far more readily than gold or silver," said *Noailles*.

"If carried out, the Sieur Law's bank will upset the Duc de Noailles," whispered Dubois to Villeroi.

"Will it?" rejoined the old marshal, in the same tone. "Then I'll support it with all my heart." And he added, aloud, "I am lost in admiration of the Sieur Law's scheme. The whole nation a grand banking company! What a stupendous idea!"

"To me the plan of a Royal Bank appears fraught with considerable danger," said Noailles. "Failure, which I deem certain, would discredit the government, and plunge us into greater difficulties."

"I have no fear of such consequences," said the Regent. "I am so strongly in favour of the scheme, that I intend to summon a council extraordinary, to which the chief capitalists shall be invited, to deliberate upon the expediency of the measure."

"Precisely the course I was about to recommend

to your highness," said Villeroy. "An extraordinary measure, such as the Royal Bank proposed by the Sieur Law, requires a council extraordinary to discuss it. But I announce beforehand my firm conviction, based upon your highness's expressed opinion, that the scheme will be found practicable, and if put into execution, will be attended with surprising results. The whole nation a grand banking company! Wonderful idea! I am amazed it never struck any of our financiers before."

"Had it done so, they would have rejected the notion as absurd," said Noailles, contemptuously.

At this moment the usher announced the Duc de Saint-Simon, and a little man, well made, splendidly attired, haughty in manner, with quick eyes, and a very sarcastic expression of countenance, entered the cabinet, and bowed ceremoniously to the Regent.

V.

THE DUC DE SAINT-SIMON.

MARMONTEL said of the Duc de Saint-Simon, and with perfect truth, "that in the nation he could only discern the nobility, in the nobility only the peerage, and in the peerage only himself." But, though proud as a Spanish hidalgo, a great stickler for the privileges of his order, and somewhat egotistical, Saint-Simon had no petty qualities. He was worthily distinguished in the Regent's corrupt court for perfect probity and uncontaminated morals. But his manner was very

sarcastic, and made him many enemies, and he was obstinate, full of crotchets, and difficult to manage. He was a man of singular shrewdness and observation, and great ability, and to him, as is well known, we owe the inimitable *Memoirs* wherein are depicted in living colours the principal personages of the French court at the period.

After the death of the Duc de Bourgogne, Saint-Simon attached himself to the Duc d'Orléans, and never wavered in his loyalty to the latter, who constantly consulted him, and generally deferred to his judgment. On the establishment of the Regency, Saint-Simon at once rose to the highest point of favour, and might have been made governor of the young king, but he declined the post, observing to Philippe, "Some mishap may occur. Your highness is aware of the calumnies spread abroad by your enemies. They will say you placed me there—for *that purpose*." The Regent shrugged his shoulders, and conferred the post upon Villeroy.

"Perhaps I am interrupting some financial discussion," said Saint-Simon, bowing to Noailles and Villeroi. "If so, I will retire."

"On no account," said the Regent. "It is true we are discussing an important plan proposed for our consideration by the *Sieur Law*, a Scottish financier whom I beg to present to you, and I shall be glad to have your opinion upon it."

"My opinion will be worth nothing," rejoined Saint-Simon. "I am wholly ignorant on financial matters, and, in fact, detest them. You have two ministers with you who are fully competent to advise you."

"But this is a question you will readily understand, *M. le Duc*," said the Regent, "and I must insist upon having your opinion. The *Sieur Law* undertakes to raise the kingdom from its present misery to the greatest prosperity, and to free the state from all pecuniary difficulties."

"The *Sieur Law*, I conclude, has discovered the philosopher's stone," observed Saint-Simon, dryly.

"He has discovered a magic word of equal potency," rejoined Philippe. "That word is Credit. By credit he engages to accomplish the beneficial changes I have mentioned."

"If that is all, the proposition is intelligible enough," said Saint-Simon. "Restore public credit, and the rest is easy. But how is that to be accomplished?"

"Ay, there is the question," remarked Noailles. "No one can deny that if public credit can be re-established, all our difficulties will disappear, but I do not see that this desideratum can be achieved by the Royal Bank proposed by the Sieur Law."

"A Royal Bank, eh?—that is the scheme!" cried Saint-Simon.

"The Sieur Law proposes to make the whole nation a grand banking company," said Villeroi.

"A magnificent idea, eh, M. le Duc?"

"Very magnificent," echoed Saint-Simon.

"I won't weary you by detailing my scheme,

M. le Duc," observed Law to Saint-Simon. "But I design to represent the whole of the revenues of state and all funded property by bank-notes. In a word, to substitute paper-money for metallic currency—the advantages of which change I have demonstrated satisfactorily to his royal highness."

"The scheme is perfectly Utopian, and scarcely merits consideration," sneered Noailles.

"Hum! I am not so sure of that," observed Saint-Simon. "I have declared my ignorance of financial matters, and my opinion may be valueless, but it appears to me that when some means must be found of liquidating the heavy debt bequeathed to the state by the late king, this plan, chimerical as it appears, deserves at least consideration."

"Granting the utility of a Royal Bank," observed Noailles—"though I would not have it conducted upon the plan recommended by the Sieur Law—a season of general distress and dis-

trust like the present is unfavourable for the experiment. Such a bank is not wanted, and if established, would not assist us in paying off the state debts. We must proceed slowly but surely—suppress all useless expenses—retrench in every department—and adopt the most energetic measures against all contractors, speculators, farmers of revenues, and others, who have enriched themselves at the cost of the state, and compel them to disgorge their illicit gains.”

“Such measures will accomplish little,” observed Saint-Simon. “Recollect what Sully said when he had made a like experiment and failed. ‘Petty rascals only fall into the nets of justice: great thieves escape.’”

“The great thieves shall not escape me,” said Noailles. “I shall ask his royal highness to appoint a commission of Visa to inquire into the claims of all state creditors; to verify the accounts; and annul all notes fraudulently emitted in the name of the government.”

"I see no harm in such a commission, M. le Duc," said the Regent. "It shall be appointed."

"But this is merely a preliminary step," rejoined Noailles. "I shall require a Chamber of Justice, before which all persons suspected of making fortunes by the scandalous means I have particularised, can be brought. The tribunal must be clothed with power to punish such delinquents generally by heavy penalties, and, in extraordinary cases, by confiscation of property."

"Before granting the request, your highness should weigh the consequences of such vexatious proceedings," observed Saint-Simon. "The Duc de Noailles will perhaps inform you how many persons can be rendered amenable to the proposed tribunal, and what will be the result of its operations?"

"I calculate that we can lay hold of about six thousand offenders, from whom, at the least, we shall obtain twelve hundred millions," returned Noailles.

"And this is all you expect!" cried Law. "When you have got that sum, you will be just as unable to discharge the state debt as you are now, to say nothing of the popular odium you will most assuredly incur by measures so arbitrary and vexatious. The only fruit of the Chamber of Justice will be thousands of informations, true or false."

"I am not blind to the difficulties of the task," rejoined Noailles, "but I shall not shrink from them. There is no alternative but this, or a national bankruptcy."

"Yes, I have proposed one," said Law. "By the Royal Bank, which I have suggested, confidence will be inspired, the circulation re-established, and very speedily public credit will be restored—and this without harshness or injustice."

"I incline to think the Royal Bank ought to have a trial," said Saint-Simon.

"I am decidedly of that opinion," added Villeroy.

"You shall have the Visa and the Chamber of Justice you require, M. le Duc, provided you consent to the adoption of the Sieur Law's scheme," said the Regent.

"I can allow no interference," rejoined Noailles, peremptorily. "Your highness has confided the direction of the finances to me, and I must manage them as I deem best. There must be no uncertainty in regard to this Royal Bank, and I must beg your highness to declare in precise terms that the notion shall be given up."

"You ask too much of his highness, M. le Duc," observed Saint-Simon.

"It is zeal for his highness's service that prompts me to ask it," rejoined Noailles.

"Let him have his way," whispered Dubois to the Regent. "His plans will ensure his own downfall."

"I am persuaded the bank ought to take place, M. le Duc," observed Philippe; "but since you are so strenuously opposed to it, I am content to

forego the scheme—for the time at least. As to the efficacy of the measures you propose for the removal of our financial difficulties I offer no opinion, but you shall have the commission and the tribunal you demand.”

“You are checked, but not beaten,” said Dubois in a whisper to Law. “Victory will be yours in the end.”

“I care not for myself,” rejoined Law, “but for the Regent, whom I could at once relieve from all embarrassment, were I permitted. The plan proposed by the Duc de Noailles will only envenom the evil it professes to cure.”

“Exactly so, and then a better physician will be called in,” said Dubois.

“Sufficient time has been devoted to business,” said the Regent, with a look of ennui. “Let us have chocolate. After the levée I will take you to the Luxembourg,” he added to Law.

On this a silver bell set on the table was struck by the Abbé Dubois, and the summons

was presently answered by a gentleman usher, accompanied by three tall valets in state liveries, bearing chocolate on silver salvers.

While the Regent and those with him were partaking of the refreshment, the doors were thrown open, and all the courtiers congregated in the ante-chamber flocked into the cabinet.

End of the First Book.

BOOK II.



COLOMBE.

I.

THE CHAMBER OF JUSTICE.

THE Duc de Noailles commenced his arbitrary measures for the reduction of the national debt by a re-coinage, raising the louis d'or of fourteen livres to twenty, and the crown of three livres and ten sous to five livres, by which nefarious proceeding he calculated upon a profit of two hundred millions. Little more, however, than a quarter of that amount was realised, since a vast quantity of gold left the kingdom.

His next experiment was upon the public securities. All holders of public stocks, and bills for

which the government was responsible, were enjoined to present them to a Commission of Visa. After rigorous examination, these notes were replaced by billets d'état, bearing an interest at four per cent.; but so enormous was the reduction, that a note previously worth a hundred francs was lowered to twenty.

A tribunal, armed with extraordinary powers, for the examination and punishment of fraudulent contractors and suspected peculators of public money, was next installed in the ancient convent of the Grands Augustins, situated on the quay of that name. Immediately upon the establishment of this formidable tribunal, several wealthy financiers were arrested, and conveyed to the Bastille, where they were imprisoned till they could be brought before the Chamber of Justice; and to prevent flight, postmasters were prohibited from furnishing horses and carriages to any person whatever. At the same time, all farmers of revenues were ordered, on pain of death, not

to remove more than a league from their place of domicile. Every person who had realised profits, directly or indirectly, from affairs connected with the State for the last twenty-seven years, was compelled to give an exact account of his dealings and acquisitions during that term, any false declaration entailing condemnation to the galleys, besides confiscation of property. Instruments of torture were kept in a chamber adjacent to the great hall in which the court was held, and these were frequently employed during the interrogatories of the accused. A premium was offered by the commissioners for denunciation. Servants were authorised to depose against their masters under fictitious names, and sons encouraged to denounce their fathers. The reward of this domestic treason was a fifth part of the property confiscated, with protection to the informer against his own creditors. But the commissioners went beyond this; and in order to popularise their proceedings, occasionally assigned a part of the pro-

perty confiscated to the inhabitants of the district in which the luckless person had dwelt.

Terror and despair seized upon all capitalists, since no one possessed of money could now consider himself safe. Unable to quit Paris, they were almost prisoners in their own superb mansions. Wealth had become a crime, and its unfortunate possessor could not free himself even by surrender of his goods. It was a punishable offence to purchase furniture, pictures, goods, or silver plate, belonging to a suspected person. Many offenders were placed in the pillory, exposed to the insults of the mob, who, hating the wealthy, exulted in their punishment, and some few were hanged.

But as the operations of the Chamber of Justice extended, so did the terror inspired by it increase. Money was hidden; luxury ceased; and only the necessaries of life were purchased. Such was the dread inspired by the redoubtable tribunal, that some individuals, at the hazard of life, sought

safety by flight. Others committed suicide. A considerable number purchased security by bribes. Large sums were secretly given to the favourites of the Regent for protection, and the courtiers soon began to turn their influence to account, offering their services to mitigate the punishment of the condemned, or procure remission of fines.

At the time when this atrocious system of spoliation was at its height, there dwelt in a large hotel in the Rue du Faubourg Saint Martin, a retired contractor, named Bernard Laborde. A few years ago, M. Laborde had been accounted rich, but, owing to the extravagance of his son Raoul, whose debts he had more than once paid, he was so reduced in circumstances that he was compelled to sell the greater part of his furniture with all his plate and valuables, and to discharge all his servants with the exception of a faithful old valet, who refused to leave him, and a femme de chambre, who attended upon his daughter, Colombe. He still continued to reside in his large

mansion in the Faubourg Saint Martin, though the greater part of the rooms were unfurnished, and had lost all their former splendid decorations. Laborde's misfortunes being well known, he had not been summoned before the Chamber of Justice to render an account of his affairs, but he was in constant apprehension of a message, and every fresh case of spoliation that reached his ears filled him with dread. Rarely did he go forth at all, except into the garden connected with his house, which, once beautifully kept, was now grievously neglected.

His daughter, Colombe, was just eighteen. Magnificent black eyes, a clear olive skin, lips red as cherries and shaped like Cupid's bow, a delicately-formed nose, dark glossy tresses, and a slight but symmetrical figure, formed the sum of her personal attractions. Her disposition was gentle and affectionate, and though brought up in luxury she submitted to the change that had taken place in her father's circumstances with resignation and

even cheerfulness. Not so Laborde: he was an altered man, always downcast and despondent.

In spite of the faults of her spendthrift brother Raoul, Colombe still retained a strong attachment for him, and, though he was forbidden the house, she sometimes received him in secret. Thus it happened, one night, when she was alone in a chamber which in brighter days had been her boudoir, and which even now was better furnished than any other room in the house, that her brother unexpectedly entered. Raoul Laborde was tall, well made, and handsome, but his features had a rather equivocal expression. His habiliments were rich and of the newest mode. He was ushered into the room by his sister's attendant, Lisette. On seeing him, Colombe, with a half scream, sprang forward to embrace him.

"What brings you here, Raoul?" she said.
"My father has not yet retired to rest, and may see you."

"No fear of that," replied Raoul. "Lisette

has let me into the house by the garden, and will let me out in the same way. I have something very particular to say to you, Colombe."

"You may go, Lisette," said Colombe, "but stay outside to warn us in case my father should come hither."

"Mademoiselle shall be obeyed, but I don't think there is any fear of interruption," said Lisette, as she retired.

"Now, what have you got to say to me?" inquired Colombe. "I hope you are not come on the old errand. I have no money to give you—not even a solitary livre."

"You have guessed my purpose, darling Colombe," rejoined her brother, in a coaxing tone. "But if you have no money, you must have some jewel, some trinket, which I can turn into cash."

"I have already given you all my trinkets, except my diamond cross, and I cannot part with that, because it was my poor mother's gift," said Colombe.

"Parbleu! that diamond cross is the very thing. It is worth a hundred louis d'or. Come, let me have it, chuck. I am in a sad strait—I am, upon my honour. Were our poor mother living, she would desire you to help me in this way."

"Our dear mother doted on you, Raoul, and could refuse you nothing, but she would not have wished me to do this. Her gift is sacred, and shall never be thrown away at the gaming table."

"Well, lend it me to-night, and you shall have it back to-morrow. Tronchin, the jeweller in the Rue Richelieu, will lend me fifty pistoles on it, and with that sum I can win a hundred louis at play, and then I shall be set up again. Do lend it me, darling."

"But suppose you should lose, Raoul? No, I am resolute. I won't lend you the cross."

"Very well, then I shall do something desperate. Adieu! cruel sister."

"Oh, Raoul!" she cried, detaining him, "will you never stop in your fatal career? By your

follies and extravagance you have ruined our father and broken our mother's heart. If you have any good feelings left, let me appeal to them. Do be warned, dear brother."

"You preach very prettily, sister," cried Raoul, impatiently; "but preaching won't get me out of my difficulties. If you won't help me my father must. I don't believe he is so poor as he pretends, Colombe. He could help me if he would. At all events, I must try him."

"I hope you won't force yourself into his presence, Raoul. You will cause him great pain, and will gain nothing by the attempt. Our father is very poor, and you have made him so."

"Well, well, I am determined to see him."

"You must not—indeed you must not, Raoul."

At this moment Lisette rushed into the room, exclaiming, "Mademoiselle, your father is at hand."

"I'm glad to hear it," cried Raoul. "This will afford me the opportunity I desire."

"You won't be so cruel—you won't trouble him thus," cried Colombe. "Hide yourself—quick! quick!"

"Go into this closet, sir," said Lisette, opening a door.

And as Raoul reluctantly complied, M. Laborde entered the room. Turned sixty, he looked seventy, had a meagre figure, sharp features, and restless glances betokening a mind ill at ease. Once tall and erect, he now stooped so much that his head was almost buried in his breast. Close behind him came his old servant, Delmace.

"I have bad news for you, my child," he said to Colombe. "M. Maurepas has been arrested to-day, and taken to the Bastille; and my poor friend Crozat, who was brought before the Chamber of Justice yesterday, and tortured to make him confess where he had hidden his money, has been sentenced to the pillory. Alas! alas! we live in terrible times, when honest men can be thus infamously treated."

"You have no cause for apprehension, dear father," replied Colombe. "The Chamber of Justice won't meddle with you. Its prey must be wealthy."

"Very true," replied Laborde, nervously. "I am a ruined man, as all the world knows, but there are wretches who thrive in these ill times by lodging informations, and some such villain might falsely charge me with hiding money."

"But as the charge could not be substantiated, it would matter little," said his daughter.

"Still I should be interrogated," rejoined Laborde. "My asseverations might not be believed, and I should be put to the torture like poor Crozat."

"Don't alarm yourself needlessly, dear father," said Colombe. "No one is likely to inform against you. There can be no motive for such an act. Your poverty, I repeat, is your safeguard."

"Well, I will endeavour to shake off my apprehensions," rejoined her father; "but it is no easy

task. I have had distress enough, Heaven knows ! The cause of all my trouble, your graceless brother Raoul, I am told, has been presented at the Palais Royal, and has become one of the Regent's favourites. Like enough. Depravity is a recommendation at that profligate court. But I am puzzled to think by what disreputable means Raoul contrives to keep up appearances. No matter. He is no longer son of mine. I have cast him off for ever."

"Not for ever, dearest father," cried Colombe. "If he is really, as you say, a favourite with the Regent, he may rise to distinction."

"You know not what you talk about, child. He is more likely to sink to the lowest depths of infamy. And now mark me, Colombe. Raoul won't dare to enter my presence again, but should you accidentally meet him, I forbid you—peremptorily forbid you—to exchange a word with him. There is contamination in all the Regent's Roués from which you should be free. There-

fore, I charge you to avoid all intercourse with Raoul. And now, child, go to your chamber. I have some business to transact with Delmace."

"Before I go, permit me another word about Raoul."

"Not one," rejoined her father, in a decided tone.

"But, father, I was only going to say——"

"I cannot hear you," he interrupted. "Go, my child, and may you sleep sounder than I am likely to do!" So saying, he kissed her brow, and she retired with Lisette.

As soon as they were gone, Laborde threw himself into a chair, and covering his face with his hands, remained for a time a prey to bitter reflection. Old Delmace watched him anxiously, but did not disturb him.

During this interval, all being perfectly still in the room, Raoul cautiously opened the closet door, and peeped out. On seeing his father and Del-

mace, whose backs were towards him, he quickly drew back, but left the door slightly ajar, so as to enable him to hear what they said.

"Monsieur seems more dejected than usual to-night," observed Delmace to his master. "May I venture to ask the reason?"

"My anxiety springs from the old cause, the Chamber of Justice, Delmace," replied Laborde. "What a frightful position I should be in were any discovery made. But you will never betray the trust reposed in you. You have sworn to maintain inviolable secrecy."

"No oath was needed to bind me, sir," replied Delmace. "All the wealth of France should not tempt me to betray you. Rest assured I will never turn informer."

"I have entire confidence in you, my good Delmace," said his master; "and as you are the only person who knows that I have money hidden in this house, I ought to have no fear. But the

numerous instances of domestic treachery and delation I have recently heard of are enough to inspire distrust."

"Monsieur does me great wrong if he has the slightest doubt of my fidelity," remarked Delmace, in a tone of reproach.

"Forgive me, my worthy friend, forgive me!" rejoined Laborde. "I know I could trust my life to you; and in fact, my liberty, if not my life, is in your hands. A word from you, and not only the hundred thousand livres which I have hidden in the cellar would be seized by the myrmidons of this accursed Chamber of Justice, but I myself should be severely punished—perhaps hanged."

"What is this I hear?" exclaimed Raoul, peeping cautiously forth. "A hundred thousand livres concealed in the cellar!"

"A fifth part of the sum secreted is the reward of the informer," pursued Laborde.

"Good! then twenty thousand livres shall be mine," mentally ejaculated his son.

"Why do you say this to me, sir?" cried Delmace. "You know it pains me to be suspected."

"But I do not suspect you, my good fellow—I do not suspect you. I know you to be proof against all temptation. I simply advert to the infamous practices of this abominable tribunal, which offers a premium for treachery. Were my worthless son aware that I had this secret hoard, he would infallibly betray me to obtain a share of it."

"You judge your worthless son correctly, sir," observed Raoul; "and you may rely upon it he won't disappoint your expectations. Within a few hours an officer of police with a dozen archers of the guard shall pay you a domiciliary visit. As soon as I can get out, I will fly to M. de Fourqueux to lay the information."

"Tell me, Delmace, do you think the cellar the safest spot in which to hide the money?" pursued Laborde.

"Where could monsieur find a safer?" rejoined the old servant.

"We must consider. Most of the secret hoards seized have been buried in vaults or gardens, so that the searchers always proceed direct to such places. A plank could easily be taken up from the floor of the grand salon, or a panel removed from the walls, so that the chest and bags containing the money might be secured."

"In my opinion, the chest and bags are quite safe where they are, hidden beneath the central stone in the cellar," observed Delmace.

"Hush, hush! don't mention the exact spot, Delmace," cried Laborde, looking round uneasily. "Some one may overhear you."

"Some one *has* overheard him, and won't forget what he has heard," muttered Raoul.

"I tell you I feel an unaccountable uneasiness about the money," pursued Laborde, grasping the arm of his old servant, "and shall remove it from

the cellar to-night. Where do you recommend me to hide it?"

"Poor old gentleman! misfortune has weakened his brain," thought Delmace. "It will be best to humour him. Well, sir, since you are uneasy, let us lock up the money in yonder closet. Tomorrow we may find some spot where it may be better concealed."

"An excellent suggestion, Delmace," cried Laborde, springing to his feet. "Let us about it at once. Come with me to the cellar," he added, snatching up the candle and tottering out of the room, followed by his old servant.

As soon as they were gone Raoul emerged from the closet.

"A precious discovery I have made!" he exclaimed. "I always suspected my father had a secret hoard, but I never fancied the amount so great as a hundred thousand livres. I will denounce him at once. Yet hold! 'tis an execrable

act I am about to commit—worse than robbery. Pshaw! the money is of no use to the miserly old hunks, since he daren't spend it, while to me it will be everything. What if I conoeal myself in the house, and carry off the chest, or one of the money-bags they spoke of. No, that won't do. If caught, I should be sent to the galleys, whereas by pursuing the other course I shall be screened and rewarded, and, best of all, the denunciation can be made in a feigned name. So away with all foolish scruples. Plague on't! here they are again," he added, preparing to retreat to the closet. "No, 'tis only Colombe."

And at the word his sister entered the room.

"I am come to see you safely off, Raoul," she cried. "My father and old Delmace have gone down to the cellar, so you need not fear meeting them. But I have a word to say before you go."

"Don't stop me now, darling," he interrupted. "I may be caught."

"I was only about to tell you, that if you will solemnly promise to return it, you shall have my diamond cross. Here it is."

"No, no, I won't take it. I feel it was wrong in me to ask it. I will find some other means of obtaining the money I want."

"Some honourable means, I hope, Raoul?" she said, arresting him.

"Honourable means, of course," he rejoined, hastily. "I tell you what, Colombe, if I am successful, as I hope to be, you shall have a thousand livres."

"You promise more than you can perform, I fear," she replied. "But how is this, sir? What new idea has crossed you? A few minutes ago you did not know which way to turn for money, and now you refuse my offer of the diamond cross, and offer me a thousand livres."

"A new plan has occurred to me while shut up in yonder closet," he replied. "Don't hinder me. I must put it into instant execution."

"I hope it is a plan of which I could approve, but I very much fear the contrary," she remarked.

"Good night, Raoul! You'll find Lisette on the stairs."

II.

A VISIT FROM THE OFFICERS OF THE CHAMBER OF JUSTICE.

COLOMBE awaited Lisette's return, and then, satisfied that Raoul was gone, retired to her chamber. But feeling disinclined to sleep, instead of seeking her couch, she sat down to read, and remained thus occupied nearly two hours, when she awakened Lisette, who was slumbering in a fauteuil on the other side of the table.

"Ah! mademoiselle," exclaimed the soubrette, as she opened her eyes, "how cruel of you to disturb me at such a moment! You have roused me from the most delightful dream. Methought I

was walking with Valentin in the gardens of Versailles——”

“Had I been aware of the agreeable nature of your dreams I would have let you sleep on,” said Colombe. “But it is past midnight, and I ought to be in bed.”

“It is not my fault, mademoiselle, that you have not been in bed long ago,” observed Lisette, yawning.

“Everybody seems late to-night,” remarked Colombe. “My father has not yet gone to his room.”

“There is nothing singular in that, mademoiselle. My master does not sleep very well, and often sits up late with Delmace. Holy mother! what is that?” she exclaimed, as a loud knock was heard at the gate. “Who can be coming here at this time of night?”

“You had better go down and see who it is,” said Colombe.

“If Delmace is still up he will go,” replied

Lisette, reluctantly. "Save us! there it is again," she added, as a still louder knock resounded through the house. "Folks who come at such an untimely hour shouldn't be in a hurry."

"I hope it is not a visit from the officers of the Chamber of Justice," cried Colombe, much alarmed. "They often search houses at night."

"Why should they come here, mademoiselle?" said Lisette, turning pale. "I'm sure they'll find nothing."

"I can't say," rejoined Colombe. "But I will go down stairs. Come with me, Lisette."

Ere they could reach the *rez de chaussée*, three loud strokes were dealt against the *porte cochère*, and in the court-yard they found M. Laborde and Delmace, both looking full of consternation. While father and daughter were exchanging anxious looks, but before a word passed between them, the gate was again struck thrice, and a loud authoritative voice called out, "Open the gate in the King's name!"

"It is a message from the Chamber of Justice!" exclaimed Laborde, in extremity of terror. "I am lost!"

"Put a bold face on it, sir," said Delmace to his master. "Your looks will excite suspicion. Shall I open the gate?"

"No—no—yes, yes!" cried Laborde. "Ask their business first."

On this old Delmace went to the gate, and opening a small grated wicket, reconnoitred the persons outside. The party consisted of an officer of police, and a dozen archers of the guard, two of whom carried torches.

"What do you want?" asked Delmace, in trembling tones.

"Instant admittance," was the reply. "Why do you detain us so long? Do you not perceive that I am an officer of police? Open the gate on peril of your life."

Thus admonished, Delmace was forced to com-

ply, but while he was unfastening the porte cochère, Laborde retreated with his daughter to a room on the ground floor, where, half dead with terror, he awaited the appearance of the officers of justice. In another minute the exempt entered the room, attended by a couple of archers with drawn swords.

"What is the meaning of this nocturnal visit, sir?" inquired Laborde, summoning up all his resolution, though his quavering voice and trembling limbs betrayed his alarm.

"You will easily guess the purport of my visit, M. Laborde," replied the exempt—a tall, stern-looking man, with a harsh voice. "I am charged to arrest you and bring you before the Chamber of Justice."

"With what offence am I taxed, sir?" demanded Laborde, slightly recovering his self-possession.

"You are accused of hiding a large sum of

money—no less than a hundred thousand livres—within your house,” replied the exempt. “You perceive, sir, that my information is exact.”

At these words Laborde staggered as if struck by a heavy blow, and sank groaning upon a chair. While solicitously attending to him, Colombe said to the officer,

“Do not misconstrue my poor father’s manner, sir. His nervous system has been sadly shaken of late, and the slightest thing affects him. An enemy has denounced him, but the accusation is wholly unfounded. He has no money to hide. Search the house from top to bottom, and you will find it stripped of all its valuables and furniture.”

“This tallies with our information, mademoiselle,” replied the exempt. “We know that your father feigns to be poor in order to escape the fines and penalties imposed by the edict, but his cunning won’t avail him. Hear me, M. Laborde,” he added to him; “are you willing to deliver up this money, or must I look for it?”

"If you doubt what my daughter asserts, you can search the house, sir," replied Laborde. "But if you are unsuccessful, I presume I shall be liberated."

"In any case, I am commanded to bring you before the tribunal," said the exempt, "there to answer the interrogatories of the procureur-général, M. de Fourqueux. It might profit you to give up the money voluntarily, but as you decline this, we must search for it. You will all go with me. Show the way to the cellar, maraud," he added to Delmace.

Stealing a furtive glance at his master, the old servant complied, and conducted the party to the lower part of the house. Arrived at the cellar door, which was unfastened, the exempt took a torch from one of the archers, and stepped into the vaulted chamber.

He then instantly perceived that a flag had been taken up, leaving a deep hollow visible. Advancing the light, he found the hole was empty,

and cried out to Laborde, who entered the cellar at that moment,

"Aha! you have been beforehand with us, I perceive, sir. The treasure has flown. What say you to this, mademoiselle?" he added to Colombe.

She made no reply, but appeared half stupified.

"Now, sir, will you tell us where to find the money?" added the exempt, turning to Laborde.

But the other made no response.

"We are wasting time here," cried the officer. "Conduct us to your young mistress's boudoir, drôle," he added to Delmace.

"Ah!" muttered Colombe, a terrible light flashing upon her. "Can Raoul have done this?—but no, no!—'tis too horrible."

Obliged to constrain her feelings, she accompanied the rest to the upper part of the house. On entering the boudoir, the exempt cast a glance around, and then marched direct to the closet, but, finding it locked, he demanded the key from

Laborde, who gave it him with a sigh. The door being opened, the officer's investigations were rewarded by the discovery of a large box and a number of stout leathern bags, to all appearance full of money. These were thrown into a corner of the closet, and no attempt had been made to hide them. In fact, they had only just been brought there. By the direction of the officer, the chest and bags were taken out of the closet, and, being placed on a table in the middle of the room, were opened, and found full of golden pieces.

"There ought to be a hundred thousand livres here," remarked the exempt to Laborde. "Is that the amount?"

"It is—I cannot deny it," replied the unfortunate man. "But who has denounced me?"

"Address that question to the tribunal," said the exempt. "I can afford you no information."

"It is clear to me now," mentally exclaimed Colombe. "My wicked brother has done this—

but I did not deem him capable of such villainy."

The rest of the archers were then summoned, and the chest and money-bags given into their charge by the exempt.

"Will you take all?" cried Laborde, in an agony of distress. "Will you leave nothing for my child?"

"I must deliver the whole of the money to the procureur-général," replied the exempt. "You and your servant, Delmace, will be taken to the Conciergerie to-night, and to-morrow you will both be brought before the tribunal. Bid farewell to your daughter."

After tenderly embracing Colombe, and consigning her in a half-fainting state to the care of Lisette, Laborde told the exempt he was ready to attend him. He and old Delmace were then taken to the Conciergerie, and locked up for the night.

III.

THE PILORI DES HALLES.

NEXT day the two prisoners were brought before the dread tribunal.

Sharply questioned by the judge as to whether he had any further sums of money concealed, and threatened with torture if he did not make full confession, Laborde could only protest that he had declared the truth. Delmace was next interrogated, and told if he gave such information as would lead to the discovery of any further secret hoard, he would not only be liberated, but rewarded. The old man, however, looking steadily

at the judge, said he would not utter a word to criminate his master. On this, he was taken to the adjoining chamber, where the thumb-screw was put on, but he bore the application with great fortitude, and as nothing could be elicited, he was at length brought back to the court.

Sentence was then pronounced upon both offenders. The whole of the money concealed by Laborde was declared to be forfeited to the State, and for the high misdemeanour he had committed he was condemned to be set thrice in the pillory, and sent to the galleys for life. Delmace was likewise sentenced to the pillory, but there his punishment was to end.

On the following day, the first part of this rigorous sentence was carried into effect. Stripped to the shirt, with ropes round their necks, lighted candles in their bound hands, the two miserable men were attached to a tumbrel. On the back of each hung a label, inscribed, "Robber of the People." In this wretched condition they were

dragged through the streets, amid the hootings of the rabble, to the Pilon des Halles—an octangular turret, built of stone, and having a tall pointed roof, which stood on one side of the picturesque old market-place. At each angle of the structure was a lofty unglazed window, so that a large horizontal wheel, turning upon a pivot, could be distinctly seen inside. Within the bands of this revolving wheel, which in fact formed the pillory, were holes destined to receive the head and hands of the sufferers. Fixed to this machine, in the painful and degrading position alluded to, poor Laborde and his faithful servant were exposed for several hours to the insults and outrages of the mob, who pelted them incessantly with mud, rotten eggs, and other missiles.

Amidst the large concourse collected on that day in the Place des Halles, there was only one person who felt any sympathy for the sufferers, and who was shocked and disgusted at the spectacle. This was a young Englishman of two-

and-twenty, and of very distinguished appearance, who had but recently arrived in Paris, and not sharing in the popular prejudices, thought the sufferers were unjustly punished, and felt exceedingly indignant at the brutality with which they were treated by the rabble.

He was about to quit the spot, and was trying to extricate himself from a group of market-women, several of whom had the aspect as well as the tongues of furies, when he was detained by a disturbance among the crowd, caused by a young damsel, who was trying too force her way towards the pillory. With this beautiful but distracted-looking creature, whose looks and attire bespoke a condition far superior to the mass of the assemblage, was a female attendant, who vainly strove to hold her back. It is scarcely necessary to say that the unhappy girl was Colombe Laborde.

"I will go to him—I will go to my father," she shrieked.

"Where is your father, mam'zelle?" demanded a Dame de la Halle, with a very repulsive countenance.

"There!—there!" replied Colombe, pointing towards the pillory.

"What, that vile miscreant—that robber!" cried the virago. "You shan't go near him. Leave him to us."

And she hurled a heavy missile at the unfortunate Laborde, which, hitting him on the head, cut open his temple. Her companions laughed loudly, and applauded her skill.

"I never miss my mark," said the woman. "You shall see me hit the wretch again when the wheel comes round."

"Oh, spare him—in pity spare him!" cried Colombe. "He has committed no crime."

"Do you call robbing the public no crime?" rejoined the woman. "I and my commères think differently. We deem the pillory too slight a punishment for such as he."

"Ay, but there is worse in store for him—he is to be sent to the galleys," observed one of her gossips, with an atrocious laugh.

Hearing all that passed, greatly struck by Colombe's beauty, and alarmed for her safety, the young Englishman, to whom we have alluded, pushed towards her through the crowd. Though, as we have intimated, he had not been long in France, he spoke the language fluently.

"This is no place for you, mademoiselle," he said. "Let me conduct you hence."

But she heeded not the offer, and did not even seem to perceive the speaker, in her anxiety to prevent further outrage to her father. So imploring and agonised were her looks that the horrible woman near her could not resist them, but let drop the brickbat she was about to hurl at the poor wretch in the pillory, saying,

"For your sake, mam'zelle, I will spare him."

"Oh, thank you! thank you for your good-

ness," cried Colombe, seizing the woman's rough hand and pressing it to her lips.

"You had better take this young gentleman's advice, and go away, mam'zelle," said the woman.

"You can do no good here."

But the unhappy girl refused to listen to counsel.

At this juncture the wheel of the pillory ceased to revolve, and after some little delay the two sufferers were released, and brought down to the tumbrel, to which they were attached as before. A passage was then cleared by the guard with their halberds, and the vehicle put in motion.

Owing to this stir, the crowd became so densely packed, that it would have been impossible for Colombe, had she attempted it, to withdraw, but she kept her place, which was now just behind the front rank of the line through which the sad procession took its course. In another moment the tumbrel came on. Bleeding, barefooted, and covered with mud and filth, the two prisoners

presented a spectacle that might have moved a heart of stone; but their miserable plight did not save them from the mob, who greeted them with groans and execrations, offering them every kind of indignity.

Poor Laborde, who was on the side of the cart nearest his daughter, walked with head bowed down. As he approached, unable to restrain herself, Colombe called out in a voice distinctly heard above the yells and vociferations of the rabble,

“Father! father!”

Raising his head quickly, the unfortunate man looked in the direction whence the cry arose, and, descriing her, exclaimed in a lamentable voice,

“My child! my child! what do you do here?”

A piercing scream burst on his ears, and he beheld his daughter fall back insensible into the arms of a tall young man behind her; but he heard and saw nothing more, for the tumbrel halted not, and the guard ordered him to move on.

IV.

EVELYN HARCOURT.

As soon as the prisoners were gone the crowd began to disperse, and the young Englishman, followed by Lisette, bore his lovely burden into the Rue des Prêcheurs, where, finding an unoccupied bench near a druggist's shop, he placed her upon it, and left her to the care of her attendant, while he himself entered the shop in quest of some restorative.

On his return he was glad to find she had regained sensibility, and he induced her to swallow a few drops of the cordial he had procured. At

first she did not know what had happened, or where she was, but, glancing round with terror, said to Lisette,

“Have I been dreaming?” Then, without waiting for a reply, she added, “Ah, no, the frightful scene was real.”

A flood of tears somewhat relieved her, and she arose; but she evidently overrated her strength, for she could scarcely stand without support.

“Can I be of any further service to you, mademoiselle?” said the young Englishman, who still lingered, unable to tear himself away. “If I might venture to do so, I would ask permission to see you safely home.”

“You are still very weak and faint, Mademoiselle Colombe,” observed Lisette. “Let me advise you to accept the young gentleman’s obliging offer—although he is a stranger. He has already been of great assistance in carrying you out of the crowd.”

A slight flush suffused Colombe’s pale cheeks

as she tendered her thanks to the young man, and, prepossessed by his amiable manner and looks she no longer hesitated, but took his proffered arm. Threading a narrow street, they gained the Rue Saint Martin, and proceeded along it towards the faubourg of the same name.

Their pace was necessarily slow, and as they went on the young man, who already felt a strong interest for the unhappy girl, acquainted her with his name and station—telling her he was a cadet of a noble English family, and that his name was Evelyn Harcourt; adding, that he had recently come to Paris to act as secretary to Lord Stair, the English ambassador.


In return for this confidence, Colombe gave him full particulars of the dire calamity that had befallen her father.

“If he has to endure another such frightful ordeal as he has gone through to-day,” she said, in conclusion, “I am certain he will not survive it. What can be done to save him? How can I

at the judge, said he would not utter a word to criminate his master. On this, he was taken to the adjoining chamber, where the thumbscrew was put on, but he bore the application with great fortitude, and as nothing could be elicited, he was at length brought back to the court.

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—save him from the galleys—restore him to home and freedom—do this, I say, and I will forgive and bless you. But shrink from it—fail in the task—and never call me sister more.”

“I will do all I can, but I fear the attempt will be in vain,” replied Raoul. “I excuse what you have just said, but I recommend you to be more cautious in the language you employ towards me in future.”

“I but speak the truth, Raoul, and you know it,” she rejoined.

“Truth cannot always be spoken with impunity in these days,” he retorted. “You believe that I have denounced my father, and you bitterly upbraid me. Are you aware that to reproach a delator, as you deem me, is punishable by death?”

“Is it so?” cried Evelyn Harcourt, who had remained a deeply-interested spectator of this scene. “Then I shall render myself amenable to the punishment, M. Raoul Laborde, for I unhesitatingly pronounce your conduct to be infamous,

and you may rest assured I shall make no secret of my opinion."

"Meddle not with me, M. Harcourt, or you will rue your rashness," retorted Raoul, touching the hilt of his rapier. "As I have just told my sister, I am content to overlook what has passed, but I shall not be equally tolerant in future."

So saying, he stalked haughtily away.

Evelyn looked after him with amazement mingled with disgust.

"Ah! mademoiselle," he said, turning to Colombe, "I am perplexed to think how one so good, so devoted, can have such an unworthy brother."

"I am still more perplexed to think how my father, who is the soul of honour, can have such an unworthy son," she replied. "Henceforward, I shall blush to own that I have a brother. Yet Raoul's nature was not always evil. He promised well in early years, but he has been corrupted by profligate associates, and has become what you see."

Having once loved him tenderly, I find it difficult to steel my heart against him, but I must do so—unless he shall repent and amend. Farewell, M. Harcourt! I will not detain you longer. For all you have done—for all you promise to do—accept my fervent gratitude.”

“Farewell, mademoiselle! I will not raise your expectations too highly lest I should disappoint them, but no effort on my part shall be spared to procure your father’s liberation.”

With this he bowed and departed. Colombe followed his retreating figure with wistful eyes, until he turned into the Rue Neuve d’Orléans, and disappeared. She then entered the gateway with Lisette.

V.

M. D'ARGENSON.

ON quitting Colombe, the first step taken by Evelyn Harcourt was to repair to Mr. Law's residence in the Place Vendôme, but, being unsuccessful in obtaining the interview he desired, he proceeded to the hotel of the English embassy. Unluckily, Lord Stair had gone to Versailles, so nothing could be done with him. Thus baffled, Harcourt addressed a long and earnest letter to Mr. Law, in which, after entering into full details of Laborde's case, he besought Law's intercession with the Regent in behalf of the unfortunate man.

procure his pardon? But I forget I am addressing a stranger, who can feel little interest in my affliction."

"There you are wrong, mademoiselle," replied Evelyn. "I feel the liveliest sympathy for you, and promise you to use all the influence I possess to procure some mitigation of your father's severe sentence. I will speak to Lord Stair, but my chief reliance is upon my friend M. Law, who is in great favour with the Regent."

"Oh! if you can prevail upon your friend to say a word in my father's behalf, the Regent, no doubt, will listen to him. I know the Sieur Law by reputation. My father has often spoken of him as a great financier."

"M. Law is a kind-hearted man as well as a great financier," replied Evelyn. "I will apply to him without delay. But have you no powerful friend—no kinsman who can help you?"

"All our friends have deserted us," replied Colombe, sorrowfully.

"Then you have no brother?" cried Evelyn.

"Alas! yes," she replied, hanging her head.

"But he is the cause of all this misery. His extravagance, I believe, caused my father to hide his money, and led to these fatal consequences."

"Where is your brother now, mademoiselle?"

"He is in Paris, but I know not where he dwells. I heard that he has become a favourite of the Regent."

"A favourite of the Regent!" exclaimed Harcourt. "Then your father is saved."

"Alas! sir, you do not know my brother Raoul," she replied. "If my unfortunate father has only to rely on him, he is lost."

Pained by what he heard, Harcourt remained silent, and nothing more passed between them till they reached the Rue du Faubourg Saint Martin.

"There is the house once occupied by my father," said Colombe, pointing it out, "and which still affords me shelter, though it will not

turbed the gamester's calmness. He was making a cast at the moment, and, throwing badly, lost his stake. Shortly afterwards he arose from the table, and, approaching Harcourt, said, in a low, menacing tone, "What brings you here, sir?"

"You will learn anon," rejoined the other.

"I must know instantly," cried Raoul, fiercely.

"Come with me into the gallery. This is no place for altercation."

"I decline to attend you, sir," rejoined Evelyn, sternly. "I have business here, and shall not stir till it is done. Return to the faro-table, and amuse yourself, while the father, whom you have denounced and robbed, is groaning in a dungeon, and the sister, whose heart you have well-nigh broken, is left to despair."

"No more of this, sir—on your life!" cried Raoul.

"I have done," rejoined Evelyn. "Go back to your friends. I will not interrupt you further."

Raoul looked irresolute, and was considering

what course he should pursue, when an usher, bearing a wand, approached them, and, addressing Harcourt, told him that his presence was required in the Regent's private cabinet. Evelyn bowed, and was preparing to obey, when the usher turned to Raoul; and said, "M. Laborde, you, also, are summoned."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Raoul, uneasily. "What can his highness want with me? However, I am ready to attend you."

Though conducted with the utmost quietude, this summons caused some surprise, and the young nobles at the faro-table laughed as they saw Raoul and Harcourt follow the usher out of the room.

In the cabinet with the Regent, besides Mr. Law and the Abbé Dubois, there was a tall, powerfully-built man of about sixty, with a remarkably stern and saturnine countenance. His habiliments were black, his peruke coal-black, his skin swarthy, his eyebrows black and bushy, his eyes black and piercing, and his nose long and hooked. Alto-

gether, a very formidable-looking personage. And his looks accorded with his office, for he was no other than the lieutenant-general of police, M. d'Argenson.

It was not without considerable misgiving that Raoul felt himself exposed to D'Argenson's searching glance; neither was Evelyn Harcourt without a certain amount of uneasiness when subjected to a similar scrutiny. There was something magnetic in D'Argenson's terrible eye, and few could resist its influence.

The Regent affably acknowledged Harcourt's salutation as the young man was ushered into the cabinet, but scarcely deigned to notice Raoul's profound reverence, from which the latter drew an unfavourable augury.

"Monsieur Raoul Laborde," said the Regent to him, "representations have been made to me in behalf of your father, who has been condemned by the Chamber of Justice for secreting his

money, and I am inclined to give the case consideration."

"I am very glad to hear it, monseigneur," replied Raoul. "I did not dare personally to plead my poor father's cause with your highness——"

"Bah!" interrupted the Regent, impatiently, "your father might remain to eternity at the galleys for any effort you would make for his liberation. Have you any idea by whom he was denounced?"

"I have not thought it needful to make inquiries on the subject, monseigneur, because I am aware that accusations are constantly made in fictitious names," replied Raoul.

"Under what name was information laid against the elder Laborde?" demanded the Regent of the lieutenant of police.

"Under that of Jean Pierre Chaillon," replied D'Argenson.

"Have you reason to believe it an assumed name?" asked the Regent.

"The name was assumed, monseigneur."

"Is the person known to you?" demanded the Regent.

"I know him perfectly," replied D'Argenson, fixing his eye upon Raoul; "but your highness will excuse me from pointing him out."

The Regent then turned to Evelyn, and said,

"I understand, M. Harcourt, that you have some statement to make in reference to this affair. If so, I am ready to hear it."

"While thanking your highness for the gracious permission," said Evelyn, "I am scarcely able to take advantage of it. All I can state refers merely to the daughter of the unfortunate Laborde, whom I chanced to meet yesterday in the Place des Halles, under very distressing circumstances, and from whose own lips I subsequently learnt the particulars of her father's case. If my sympathies were awakened for him by

this recital, abhorrence for his unnatural denouncer was excited in a yet more forcible degree."

"Take heed what you say, M. Harcourt," cried Raoul. "It is forbidden, on pain of death, to speak in disparagement of a delator to the Chamber of Justice."

"Soh! you admit, then, that you have denounced your father?" rejoined Evelyn.

"I admit nothing," said Raoul. "I simply give you a caution. M. d'Argenson will tell you that by this tribunal a servant is invited to inform against his master, and a son against his father. Is it not so, sir?" he added to the lieutenant of police.

D'Argenson answered briefly in the affirmative.

"It is not for me to offer an opinion upon the necessity of such proceedings," observed Harcourt, "but I cannot bring myself to describe them in other terms than as revolting to human nature; while at any hazard to myself I must ex-

press my abhorrence of the conduct of a son who could betray his father."

"It is lucky for you, sir, that M. Raoul Laborde does not own he is such a son," remarked the Regent, "or you might be brought before the Chamber of Justice. As a stranger, I excuse you, but it will be well for you to bear in mind for the future that liberty of speech is not so great here as in your own country, and, however praiseworthy your sentiments may be, it is sometimes imprudent to give utterance to them. As regards the elder Laborde, I must say that, though I undoubtedly commiserate him, I do not feel inclined to yield to the solicitations made to me for a remission of his sentence."

"Your highness would not say so if you could behold his daughter, Colombe, and hear her plead for him," said Harcourt.

"I cannot tell what effect she might have upon me," said the Regent. "But in her absence I am immovable."

"Then we must have recourse to beauty, since beauty alone can melt you," said Law. "Mademoiselle Laborde is without, and only awaits your highness's permission to appear."

The Regent looked surprised, but not displeased by the information.

"I trust I shall not incur your highness's displeasure by confessing that I have caused her to be brought here," remarked Law. "She is now in the small ante-room."

"Let her come in," cried the Regent.

Law went to a side-door, and passing into a small adjoining chamber, communicating with a private staircase, and reserved for those who were allowed a private interview with the Regent; he presently returned, leading Colombe by the hand. Dark habiliments of plain material and simple fashion displayed her faultless figure to advantage; and though her features bore traces of the suffering she had undergone, they had lost nothing of their wondrous beauty. Arising on her en-

trance, the Regent advanced a step towards her, and would have raised her as she threw herself at his feet, but she would not quit her kneeling posture.

"I will not affect ignorance of the object of your visit, mademoiselle," he said, in kind and encouraging accents. "You have come to me to solicit grace for your father. Is it not so?"

"Such is, indeed, my errand, monseigneur," she rejoined. "I implore compassion for him. I will not attempt to vindicate his conduct. He was culpable in concealing his money, but he has already been severely punished for the offence by the confiscation of his property, and by a degradation which to him must be worse than death, and which I cannot think of without feelings of shame and horror. Save him, I implore your highness, from a repetition of this horrible punishment, which, perchance, he may not survive, and if he should, it will only be to linger out his days among felons and malefactors. Be merciful

to him. Spare him for my sake, for if his cruel sentence be fully carried out, I shall die of grief and despair."

"Nay, that shall never be, if I can hinder it," said the Regent, in accents of mingled kindness and gallantry. "Rise, mademoiselle. Your petition is granted. Your father shall be spared further punishment. I will sign an order for his immediate liberation, together with that of his servant. I cannot enjoin restitution of his property, for that is forfeited to the State."

"Enough, enough, monseigneur!" cried Colombe. "You have given me my father's liberty—his life—that is all I require. I want words to thank you for the boon. You have raised me from the depths of misery to perfect happiness."

"Not to keep you in suspense, you shall be the bearer of the order for your father's liberation," said the Regent, smiling. "Here it is," he added, signing a warrant, and delivering it to her.

With looks expressive of heartfelt gratitude, she knelt down and kissed the hand graciously extended towards her by the prince.

"I will not detain you longer, mademoiselle," said the Regent. "You are at liberty to retire."

"Have I your highness's permission to attend my sister on this errand of mercy?" asked Raoul.

"Oh no! no!" exclaimed Colombe, shuddering. "It is he who——" And she stopped.

"I understand what you would say," observed the Regent. "I have not yet done with you, sir," he added to Raoul. Then, turning to Evelyn, he said, "As you have so warmly interested yourself in Laborde's behalf, M. Harcourt, it is but proper you should be present at his liberation. Go with her."

Evelyn bowed profoundly. As Law was conducting Colombe to the door, the Regent whispered to the Abbé Dubois, who had taken no part in the proceedings, though he had watched

them curiously, "Harkee, Dubois, I must see that girl again. She is uncommonly pretty."

"Your highness shall be obeyed," replied the complaisant abbé.

As Law returned, Raoul made a step towards the Regent, but the latter motioned him back.

"In what have I offended you, monseigneur?" asked Raoul.

"Do not presume to question me, sir," rejoined the Regent, haughtily. "Henceforward you are forbidden to enter my presence."

"At least, your highness will not refuse to mention the fault I have committed?" pleaded Raoul. "In the opinion of M. de Noailles, and the Commissioners of the Chamber of Justice, I have done a highly meritorious act."

"The knave is troublesome," said the Regent, turning to D'Argenson. "Deal with him."

"I have already felt it my duty to advise your highness," said the lieutenant of police, "that the

person before us, Raoul Laborde, is a suspected sharper, and a constant frequenter of tripots. I have very disadvantageous reports of him from my agents."

"But, my good M. d'Argenson, charges like these might be made with equal propriety against all the distinguished persons most in favour with his highness," murmured Raoul. "I have done nothing worse than Messieurs De Broglie, Nocé, or the rest of the Roués."

"Bid him hold his peace, and begone!" cried the Regent, impatiently.

"A moment, monseigneur. I have not quite done with him," said D'Argenson. "Were not this model of effrontery, who ventures to compare his conduct with that of the high and honourable persons who enjoy your highness's favour, under your protection, I should arrest him for certain knavish practices, which, if proved, would entitle him to take his father's place at the galleys."

Seeing that things were going decidedly against him, Raoul thought it best to assume a different manner, and throw himself upon the Regent's compassion.

"In consideration of your former favour, I implore your highness not to suffer me to be thus severely dealt with," he cried.

"He deserves no pity," observed the Regent to D'Argenson. "Yet do not be too hard upon him. Exile from Paris may be sufficient punishment."

"As your highness pleases," replied the lieutenant of police. "You hear, Raoul Laborde," he added, in an authoritative tone, to the individual addressed. "You will leave this city within twenty-four hours. If found within its walls after that time, you will be instantly arrested and clapped in prison."

"I obey," replied Raoul, with a sigh. "What I chiefly regret in quitting Paris is, that I can no longer participate in your highness's charming

suppers, but 'I shall ever remember them with delight."

And with a profound reverence he withdrew.

"The rascal has wit," remarked the Regent to the lieutenant of police.

"He has not a particle of good in his composition, and will come to an ill end," remarked D'Argenson.

"I hope not, or he will blame me," remarked the Regent, laughing.

"Very likely, monseigneur," replied D'Argenson, with a grim smile. "I presume your highness has done with me."

And with a glance at Law, that bespoke an understanding between them, he bowed and retired.

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"It is not for me to offer an opinion upon the necessity of such proceedings," observed Harcourt, "but I cannot bring myself to describe them in other terms than as revolting to human nature; while at any hazard to myself I must ex-

tion of a bank of discount, which, from the low rate of interest it will require, shall effectually check usury; secondly, the formation of a company of commerce. As the establishment will be a private project, it will assist the treasury without in any way compromising it."

"You will recognise the force of that argument, duke?" said the Regent to Noailles.

"I do not see why your highness should take so much interest in this Bank," said the Duc de Noailles. "I cannot believe it will realise the Sieur Law's expectations; but as it is to be a private speculation, and the government will not be compromised by it, I am willing to assent to the scheme."

"You give your consent with the best grace imaginable, duke," said the Regent, laughing; "and I, as well as the Sieur Law, am infinitely beholden to you. An edict shall be issued authorising the immediate establishment of the Bank."

"You have gained the first step," whispered Dubois to Law. "All the rest will follow."

"I half regret the withdrawal of my opposition," muttered Noailles. "But it is too late to retract."

"Arrangements shall be made for opening the Bank on the publication of the edict," said Law. "I propose to establish the offices at the Hôtel de Mesmes, in the Rue Sainte Avoine, which I have already secured for the purpose, and which will afford ample space for the extensive operations I contemplate."

"I have never visited the Hôtel de Mesmes, though it was once the residence of the renowned Constable, Anne de Montmorency, and the occasional abode of Henri II.," observed the Regent. "You shall show it me, M. Law, and I can then judge of its fitness for the purpose to which you design to apply it."

"Your highness does me infinite honour," re-

plied Law, bowing. "Unquestionably, the hotel is a more commodious structure than either the Bank of England or the Bank of Amsterdam."

"And you propose to rival those national establishments, eh, M. Law?" asked Noailles, derisively.

"Why not, M. le Duc?" rejoined Law. "I see no reason why France should be behind any other country in Europe, but I perceive many why she ought to be in advance of all."

"You must subscribe to that sentiment, duke," said the Regent, laughing.

"Most assuredly, monseigneur," replied Noailles. "I merely meant to observe, in reference to the Hôtel de Mesmes, that it appears somewhat too large for a private Bank."

"That must depend upon the requirements of the Bank itself," rejoined the Regent. "It is to be hoped that M. Law may not find it large enough. At any rate, I will inspect the house and judge of its capability. I will go this very

day, after the council. No time must be lost in carrying the project into effect. To you, duke, I confide the task of laying it before the council of finances. Recommended by you, it is certain of adoption. Letters patent, authorising the plan, can then be registered by the parliament, after which M. Law will be able to commence operations."

Seeing it was in vain to struggle further, Noailles made a merit of necessity, and promised implicit obedience to his highness's behests.

"Your Bank is now virtually established," observed Dubois in a low voice to Law.

Not many days after the assent of the Duc de Noailles had been obtained, Mr. Law's long-delayed scheme was carried into effect.

It being understood that the project was agreeable to the Regent, and that extraordinary favour would be shown to the Company, all the shares were immediately taken, Law himself having placed the whole of his funds in the Bank.

Authorised by letters patent of the second of May, 1716, the establishment was opened at the Hôtel de Mesmes, in the Rue Saint Avoine, under the designation of the GENERAL BANK OF LAW AND COMPANY.

END OF VOL. I.

C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.



